

BAPU'S LETTERS — I

TO ASHRAM SISTERS

(From 6-12-1926 to 30-12-1929)

Editor

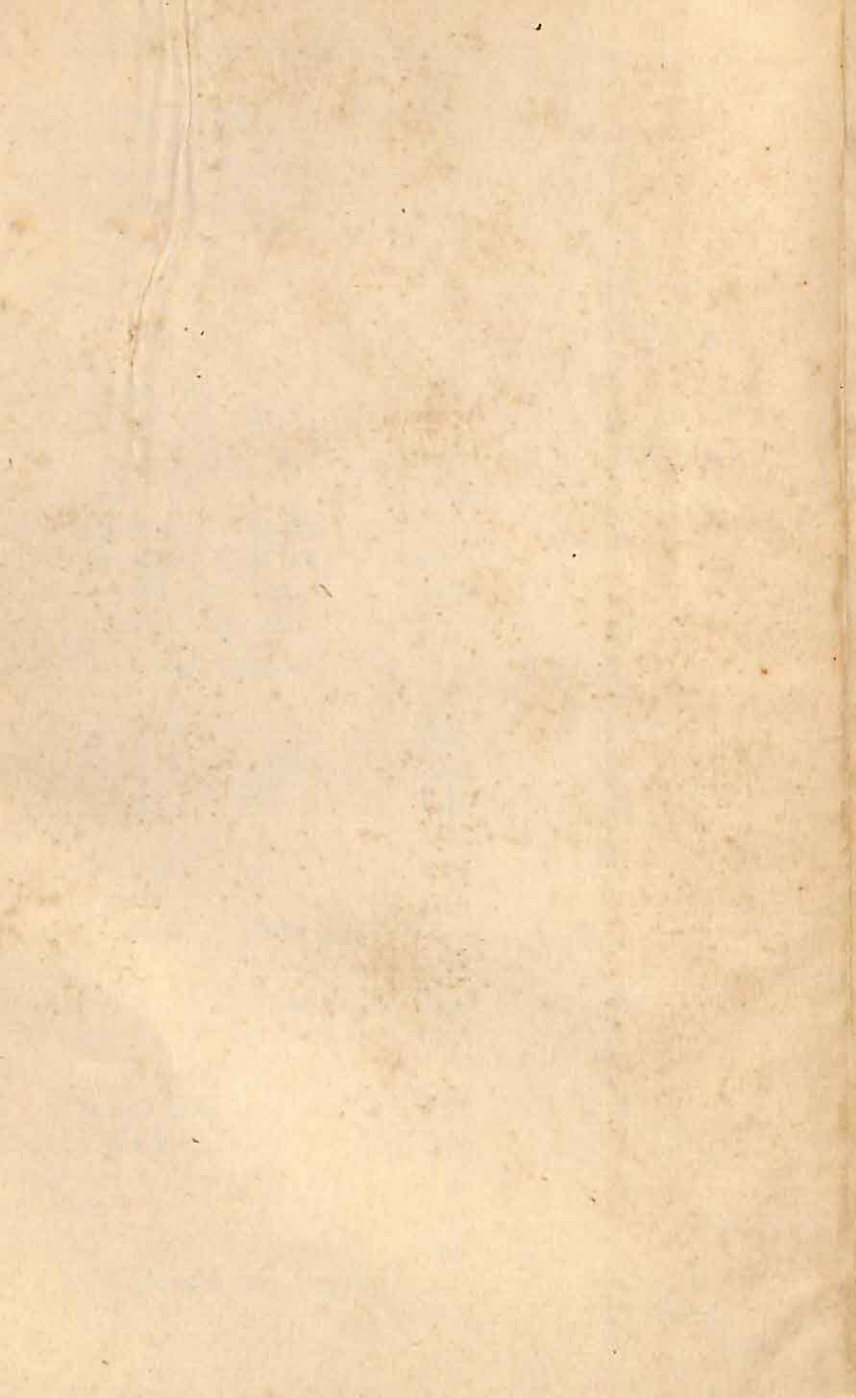
KAKASAHEB KALELKAR

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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
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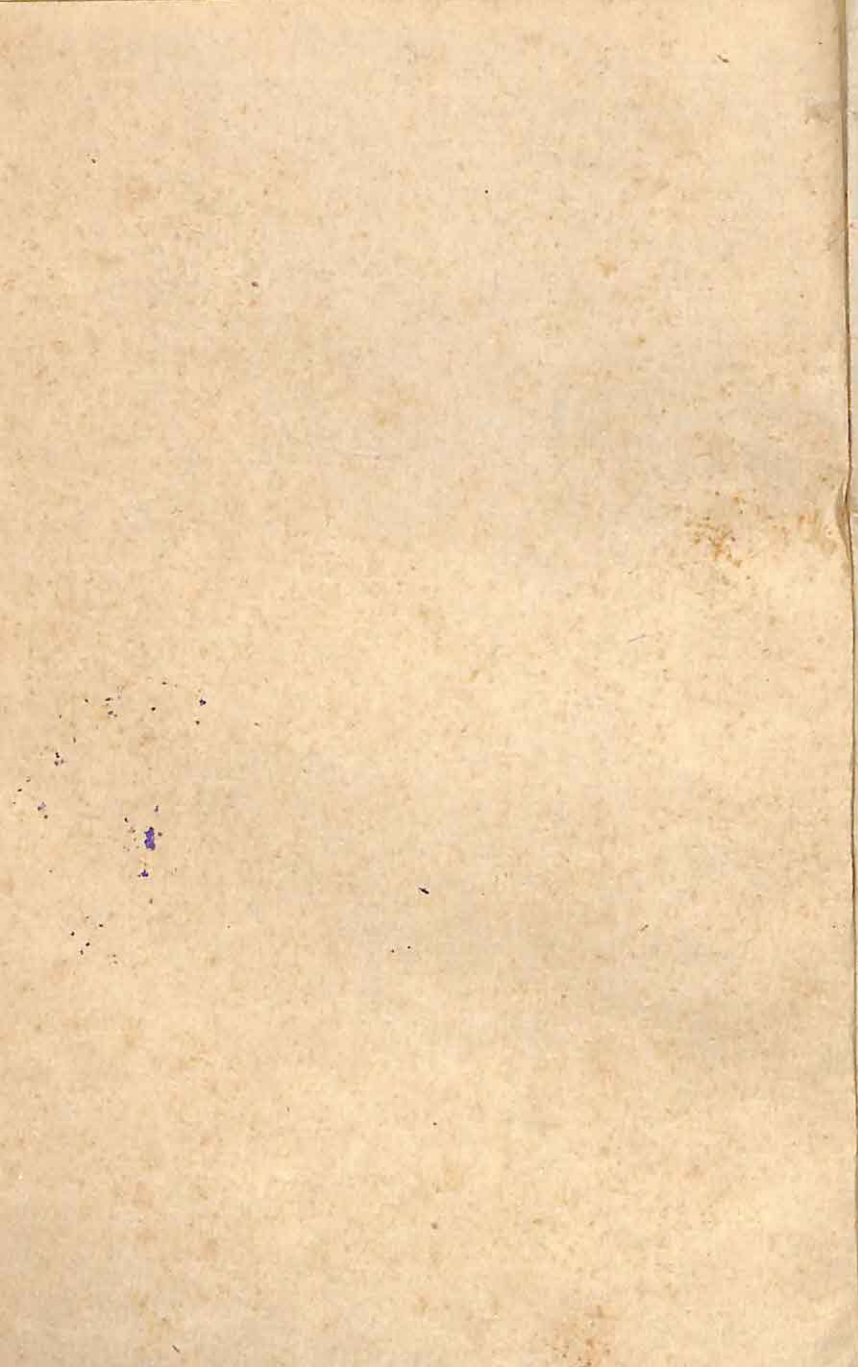
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Editor
KAKASAHEB KALELKAR

Translated from Gujarati
by
ARVINDLAL L. MAZMUDAR



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

[First Edition]

A substantial part of Gandhiji's permanent personality consists of his letters. There is no limit to the letters he addressed to persons, differing in age, status and nationality and on various subjects. How many hidden phases and facets of the life of this great man do these letters reveal! From the point of view of his biography, too, these letters provide a wealth of material. Gandhiji entrusted to the Navajivan Trust all his writings, published or unpublished. 'Navajivan' accordingly decided to collect as many of his letters as possible and to publish them in a systematic way. To this end we issued a public request asking persons who have Gandhiji's letters to send them to us, and saying that we would treat them with the necessary confidentiality, have them copied and would send back the originals to the owners. In response to this appeal a large number of ladies and gentlemen entrusted their letters to us. It is hoped that others, too, will follow suit.

Kakasaheb has written in detail in the Preface about the letters that are being published in this book. Letters addressed to women form a special series. He has undertaken to go through all of them and get them ready for publication. Of these there are three or four distinct groups. The letters contained in this book form one such group and we have given it the main title 'To Ashram Sisters'. The other groups will

also be given similar distinctive names. But the general sub-title with numerals will be 'Bapu's Letters', for all such collections.

On behalf of 'Navajivan' I thank Kakasaheb for editing these letters, and also to those who gave us their co-operation and assistance in collecting them.

It is hoped that this collection of letters would prove of interest to all.

Navajivan Trust
1-8-'52

JIVANJI D. DESAI

[Second Revised Edition]

This is the second revised edition of the book. We are grateful to Shri Sudarshan V. Desai for revising the English translation for us.

22-4-'60

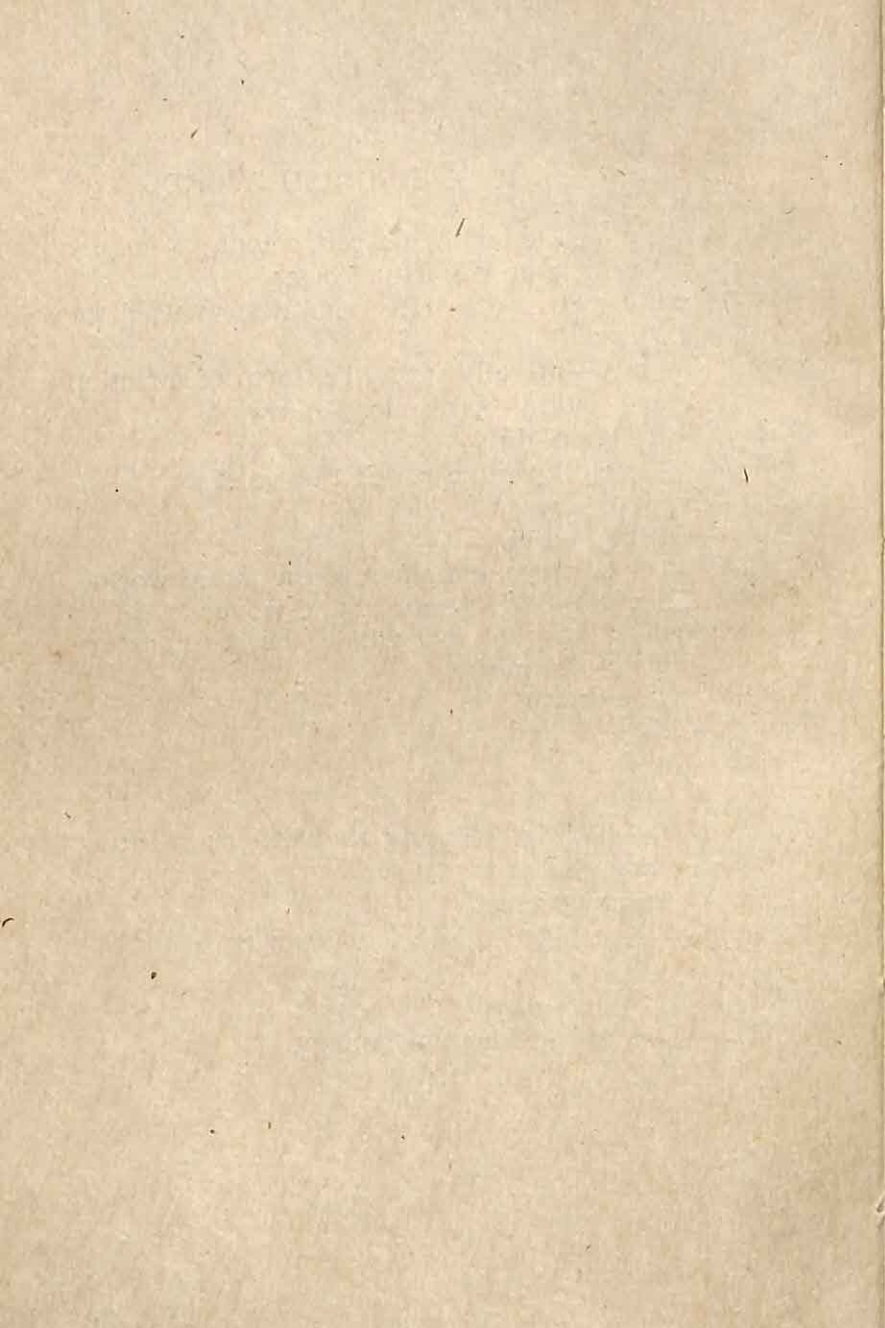
TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

It is impossible to imitate and faithfully reproduce in a foreign language all the aspects of the inimitable diction of a thinker and stylist like Gandhiji — simplicity, earnestness, brevity, clarity and humour. It is particularly difficult to capture the reflection of the intensely personal idiom of a letter. An attempt, however, has been made in this translation to keep as closely to the original material and to Gandhiji's diction as the difference in structure and idiom of Gujarati and English languages would permit. I do not know whether I have succeeded in the attempt. Dr. Bharatan Kumarappa has kindly revised my translation at great sacrifice of his valuable time.

A. L. M.

MEANING OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS

- Ashram* — a place for spiritual retirement ; a colony of workers run on a spiritual basis
- Ba* — literally mother ; an affectionate term used for Gandhiji's wife
- Bapuji (Bapu)* — literally father ; a term of affection used for Gandhiji by his close followers
- Dharma* — religion, duty
- Dhoti* — loose cloth wound round the waist
- Ghat* — bank of a river
- Ghee* — clarified butter
- Karma* — law of cause and effect in the moral world
- Khadi (Khaddar)* — hand-spun, hand-woven cloth
- Khus khus* — a fragrant root which absorbs moisture and thus cools a place
- Mandal* — institution
- Pandit* — learned man
- Purdah* — veil
- Sadhu* — ascetic
- Satyagraha* — literally clinging to truth or spiritual force ; non-violent resistance
- Swaraj* — self-government
- Tambura* — a stringed musical instrument
- Tola* — $2\frac{1}{2}$ tolas = 1 oz.
- Vidyapith* — University
- Vina* — a stringed musical instrument



PREFACE

While discussing the problems of community living in the Ashram, I once said to Bapuji :

“ All the men who have come to the Ashram have done so because they were attracted by your activities. Of course, service to the Nation is generally the ideal of all. But some have been drawn by the idea of political independence, others by the hope that Hinduism will be revitalized through you, others still by the fact that non-violence has begun to be a living and powerful force through you. Some are attracted chiefly by your efforts for the removal of untouchability ; there are others like us here because we think that this is the best place for carrying on experiments in National Education. But it cannot be said of the women in the Ashram that they have come here because they have sought any definite ideal. Excepting one or two like Gangabehn, the rest have come merely following their husbands, fathers or brothers. It is obvious that they have had to accept Ashram life out of necessity. Some of them, if not actually opposed to the Ashram ideals, do have at least a dislike for them. I am not thinking only of the vow of celibacy. Some of them, for instance, do not like our effort to train them so as to subordinate family life in order to develop community life. Our Lakshmibehn has become rather proficient here because she was already used to community life in the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. But having seen that all the burden has to be borne by those like her who have this zeal for community living, even she is losing sympathy for this ideal. Our rules regarding food too annoy our women.

“ Further, men as a rule have hardly enough patience to discuss a little every day with their women

and explain things to them. Most of them want just to get along somehow. As a result, our women-folk appear to be trying to weaken Ashram life instead of enriching it. And thus our difficulties go on increasing. Only you can find a way out of this."

There was much discussion on this subject and it was finally decided that Bapuji himself should conduct a class for women. He improved on this idea by starting special morning prayers for them. He selected all the verses for these prayers, and taking time out for the lectures, he gave out his best in these classes for women.

All this had a marvellous effect. There was a new awakening amongst the Ashram women. Their problems came to be discussed. The men realised more clearly the difficulties of their women. A large number of special classes were started and a large variety of questions were thrown up. About that time Bapuji decided to retire from active politics and to pass a complete year in the Ashram. He gave many discourses. After the end of the year he started on a tour of South India. Those were the days following the heavy floods in Gujarat. The Congress Session was also subsequently held at Madras. But since Bapuji had retired from Congress politics, he toured the South to help Shri Rajagopalachari in his Khadi propaganda work. He also toured Ceylon on the same mission, and went to Orissa. After the Gauhati session of the Congress he re-entered politics and undertook to offer suggestions and advice to the Swarajya party.

For three years — 1927, 1928 and 1929 — he regularly wrote letters to the Ashram women and tried to keep up the atmosphere he had created in the Ashram. He would suggest some constructive activity

to them, and if they took it up, he encouraged them. If, however, they got nervous or doubtful, he modified or withdrew his suggestions, and thus put them at ease again. He would later put his suggestion in a different form and with greater success. He encouraged the Ashram women to greater effort by telling them of the activities carried on by other women as observed by him during his travels. Thus, by various means he succeeded in creating a great awakening among Ashram women.

He was also able to see the fruit of that awakening. For instance, when he began his Dandi March many of the men and youths of the Ashram joined him, and the heavy burden of running the various departments of the Ashram was borne by the women.

Even women who did not belong to the Ashram did marvellous work those days. They carried on the work of picketing liquor shops, of pleading with liquor merchants and of exhorting men and women in the families of liquor addicts to gird up their loins to fight against the evil of drink. When one recalls those days of national fervour, especially among Indian women, one is wonderstruck and says, "Those were the days". There is no doubt that in those days many individuals seem to have transcended the human capacity for hard work.

II

Fortunately Manibehn Patel kept notes of the discourses that Bapuji gave to the women of the Ashram in the year 1926. It cannot of course be said that these notes are completely in his own words, as for instance his letters are. But I know of Manibehn's care, concentration and conscientiousness; and on

going through the notes one is convinced that whatever they contain, is not only genuine, but mostly in Bapuji's own words. It is inevitable that while taking down notes of oral discourses, some points get left out, but whatever is recorded, seeing that it was taken down at the time, is valuable.

It appears from Bapuji's letters that there were three things he tried, with great insistence to achieve :

(1) To impress upon the minds of women the vital importance of community life and to employ various means to awaken and strengthen in them the sense for community life.

(2) To get everyone to accept the idea that education does not merely mean literacy, but that it means more especially the building up of character and the development of necessary skills for everyday living.

(3) To see that we do not become a burden on society and especially on the suppressed classes, to be vigilant that no evil enters our lives in any form, and to provide the necessary atmosphere for this by creating a positive faith in physical labour, industriousness, simple living, and self-control.

Along with these three, there runs all through his letters, like the accompaniment of a Tambura, the theme of freedom for women. That woman is in fact not weak ; that there is no reason why she should be dependent on man ; there is no eternal rule that leadership in society should always remain in the hands of men ; that woman can shape and develop her life in the manner she chooses for herself, and thus only can she help in achieving human progress. In these letters, Bapuji never tires of giving such advice to women, of course only in relation to their capacity to accept it.

Thieves and burglars sometimes used to enter the Ashram. Taking advantage of this occasion, Bapuji raised the question : what should women do if thieves came ? Supposing there were no men in the Ashram, would the Ashram women be able to protect themselves ? If we had the letters written to Bapuji by the Ashram women during the course of discussion on this topic they would have provided very valuable material. But now we can only guess the contents of the letters from Bapuji's replies to them.

Man has enslaved woman, says Bapuji. Having given the first place to his own lust for sensual pleasures, man has rendered woman's life one-sided, dependent and artificial. It is because of man's jealousy and possessiveness that woman came to be regarded as weak, helpless and needing protection. Taking all this into consideration, it must be held that the ultimate responsibility for protecting women lies with men. As long as there is a single man alive in the Ashram, it is his duty to lay down his life in the protection of women. Even if Bapuji accepts this, he also continues that although women may not at present be able to protect themselves, ultimately they would have to develop that capacity, however slowly.

The distinction which exists between the ' higher ' classes and the working classes is not restricted merely to educated people or to men ; the prejudice has entrenched itself equally deeply in the minds of women. Knowing this, Bapuji in these letters advises the Ashram women to try and develop bonds of kinship with working class women.

Some of the Ashram women were mere girls, while others were old and uneducated. Some were

experienced, others not so. Some were brought up in cities ; others came straight from the villages. Nor, did they all belong to the same province. Under these circumstances, one has to think ten times before putting forward a single suggestion. So Gandhiji is very cautious while making suggestions in these letters. "Do only what you can fully accept ; do only what is unanimously decided ; leave the rest" — in this way he removed their fears at every step.

He begins with insistence on punctuality. If one is to attend prayers, let one do so on time. In Sanskrit 'Samaya' (समय) has two meanings : (1) Time and (2) Promise. *Samayah pratipalyatam* thus has to be understood and followed in both these senses. So one must come for the prayers on time. This is the first teaching of Bapu. And step by step the other teachings follow — that one should concentrate while reciting the prayers, that one should learn the verses by heart, memorize the chapter from the Gita, be careful about pronunciation and so on. Once it is decided to attend prayers, one cannot avoid all this except under exceptional circumstances. Whatever is undertaken must be carried out. Prayer is a bath for the heart. Just as we never fail to take a bath every day, so also we should not miss prayers that purify the heart.

In the past, religion generally meant going to a temple for worshipping idols. In this age Shri Rama (God) has manifested himself in the spinning wheel. One must work at the spinning wheel by way of performing *yajna* (sacrifice), i.e. doing something for the good of others. Even in the present Kaliyuga we must not forget the occasion when Krishna manifested himself in the form of clothes (to Draupadi). It is only by

renunciation that life becomes ennobled. But renunciation as such is not easy. It is easy to make a sacrifice if one develops an attitude of service to another. It is for this reason that 'sacrifice with a spinning wheel' is insisted on. One must spin regularly : what one does regularly seems more and more congenial. At the same time, it irks the mind if we try to do too much of one kind of activity at one time. If we carry on two such activities — prayer and spinning together as a community, we might achieve a fellowship not only among ourselves but also between ourselves and God.

In these ways, Gandhiji tried to develop among women a social outlook wider than family attachment ; and to this end he suggested to them that in their inner lives, they should prepare their mind for this outlook and at the same time so far as outside activities go, to appoint from amongst themselves a president and to help her to be of service to all. "Co-operation among Ashram women is exceedingly essential. Regard the Ashram as one family, and through it cultivate the sense of the whole world as one family. Today there is special need for women workers, because women hold the key to Swaraj. Become experts in your work, lead pure lives ; and spread yourselves throughout India. You must disprove the common notion that women are timid and weak. Do not discuss things too long in your meetings ; eschew all bitterness and squabbles. The whole purpose of meeting together is to win one another's hearts." It is after thus exhorting women on such important matters that Gandhiji gradually entrusted to them the running of the common kitchen, because it is a field already familiar to women.

With the kitchen also came the management of the stores. To manage the stores, keeping accounts is necessary. So that too had to be learnt. After having reached this point, Bapuji tried to arrange that the Balamandir (kindergarten) should also be entrusted to women.

As regards education, Bapuji put before them a very light curriculum — practice in reading and writing, improvement in handwriting, learning correct pronunciation, and enough arithmetic to be able to do simple accounts i.e., addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Then training in manual skills. This includes several things; e.g. that we should gradually become peasants, weavers, *bhangis* (sweepers) and cowherds; learning to clean latrines is an important part of national education; again as long as we require milk for ourselves and our children, we should also concern ourselves with the work of dairying.

These are the fundamentals of education which Bapu placed before the ladies; but he insisted more emphatically that true education consists in educating and training our hearts. For this the first step is the development of fearlessness. One must give up feelings of joy at birth or sorrow at death. If one likes to live, rebirth after all will follow death. If one, on the other hand, does not like to be born again, one can work for salvation in this very birth. Thus from either point of view, one must drive away the fear of death.

First of all women should get rid of the notion that they are helpless in the absence of men. And to this end, they should give up ornaments and finery.

Real beauty is that of the heart. They should cultivate it. Beautifying one's person and putting on jewelry are only for rousing the passions. To be rid of passions is true celibacy. If we can achieve this, we have attained salvation in this very birth. If passions cease, afflictions also cease. We have been given our youth not for nursing passions but for conquering them. We should certainly practise fine arts. But true art is simple and natural. There is considerable scope for art even in maintaining neatness and order in one's surroundings.

In view of the inborn artistic sense of women, Bapuji says that the tasks of organising exhibitions and such like is really theirs.

Whenever laxity was seen in the organisation of women in the Ashram, Gandhiji sensed the danger and made it clear that rules should not be relaxed. He said that it is better to scrap the rules than to slacken them and to continue to have them. If people cannot live with others and if they cannot promote community life, he said, they might as well live separate or with relatives.

On every occasion, Bapuji teaches the art of introspection. While discussing what women should do if thieves visited the Ashram, Gandhiji clearly shows that thefts take place because we do not strictly adhere to the vow of non-possession, and do not remain vigilant. Deprecating various customs prevailing in the name of religion, he teaches that observance of Dharma means selfless service of others, mastery over passions, and casting off fear. To conceal anything is sin, since at the root of all untruth is lack of courage.

Devotion (*Bhakti*) is the greatest and the most

important aspect of Dharma. While discussing it briefly, but profoundly he has observed that devotion means faith, faith as much in one's self as in God. One can scarcely meet with a more profound comment on devotion.

Dharma means doing good to others. But it is absolutely necessary to eschew all pride and idea of 'self' from such benevolence. This he has never missed an opportunity of saying. Thus he mentions how the Ganga brings silt from the upper regions, deposits it on both its banks, thus rendering them fertile, and then goes ahead. Bapuji goes on to add : 'The Ganga runs away as though not wanting to listen to the words of praise from her grateful children.'

He also notes how wherever we cast our eyes in our country there is lack of sanitation. On the banks of a river, in the streets of a town, and even in the temples of God, there is uncleanness and filth, as though outside of our own homes, we had no responsibilities.

From beginning to end the theme of these letters is education of the heart. Education is character plus literacy. After giving this simple definition of education, Bapuji has stated that character includes fearlessness, devotion to work and purity. Service must be done in the spirit of आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु or finding the same self in all creatures. And Bapuji brings it clearly into perspective when he says that if one has to forgo regular prayers because of one's pre-occupation in service, it is not to be regarded as a neglect of prayers, for in situations of emergency prayers become a part of the duty performed.

How is it possible that Bapuji would not describe

the grand and interesting scenes observed during his travels? And yet how could he spare time for this, having once undertaken the great task of awakening the nation? Therefore, whether it is the Brahmaputra in Assam, and description of the Congress camp of artistically made straw cottages on its banks, the beauty of the Ghats of the Ganga, the mango-groves of Bihar or the dress of women in Colombo or of cities like Mandalay and Hardwar—all these are dealt with so briefly that his restraint in this regard cannot but disappoint us. But Bapuji wanted to stress just one thing on the minds of women: Get trained in the Ashram, be expert in your work; be fearless and go out into the world to serve helpless women.

He may have been engaged in service of Harijans but even then he was equally conscious of the great need of the service of women. The protection of the cow brought to his mind the need of serving helpless women. He was always particular that women should of course preserve their distinctive characteristics, and yet they must not regard themselves in any way inferior to men. It is not the slightest exaggeration to say that for the purpose of improving the conditions of women, he became a woman himself. He did to an extraordinary extent develop a woman's heart in himself. So he was able to reach the hearts of women.

Only a representative of women may write in detail as to what services Bapuji rendered to them and what results it led to. For with the Gandhian age, we see the beginning of an enlightened age for Indian women.

Swarajya Ashram,
Bardoli, 9-9-'49

KAKA KALELKAR

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BAPU'S LETTERS — I
TO ASHRAM SISTERS

PRINTED BY THE
JOHN W. PETERSON

THE LETTERS

1

Wardha,
Day of Silence, 6-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

As promised, I am writing to you the first thing after breakfast.

It is five minutes to seven. So you must now be on your way to the prayer-ground. You must keep to whatever time you might fix. I take it that all those who promised to attend prayers are attending them, except for reasons quite beyond their control. I have suggested to Ramaniklal that each day he should explain to you a verse or two from the Gita. However, you can arrange to have anything else you might choose to be read to you. Never lose the habit of writing something. Always try to improve your handwriting.

But all this does not constitute *dharma*—it is an aid to its practice. The definition of *dharma* is already made in the verses which we used to read at the prayers. What we really want to do is to practise it. *Dharma* is benevolence. Benevolence is to wish

and work for the good of others and to serve others. You can make a beginning by loving one another like your own sisters, and by sharing one another's grief. But this is only one of the many things which have to be done. Since I am to write to you every week, I might stop my sermonizing here.

Dakshabehn, Kamalabehn and Chi.† Rukhi are all well. They travelled in a third class compartment, but it was not crowded, so they had no difficulty. Only I came by the second class. Lakshmidasbhai is fully taken up with the work connected with the spinning wheel. Here, too, recitation of the Gita goes on as there. For the rest, please read my letter to Chi. Purushottam.

Blessings from Bapu

† In Gujarati, elders, while writing about younger people prefix Chi. (i.e. Chiranjivi — long-lived) to their names.

Wardha,
13-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

Today too I am thinking of you after breakfast. It is exactly 6-50, so it is time for your morning prayers. You may miss all else but not this. It brings us all together, and all of us together with God. It is a real purifying bath. Just as our body becomes dirty without a bath, so also the pure soul appears impure unless our hearts are cleaned with prayer. Therefore, never miss prayers. You also have an opportunity to meet everyone at the 4 a.m. prayers. It is however, not possible for all ladies to attend that prayer. But at the seven o'clock prayer, they have a chance of getting together. It is possible for all of them to attend it. Mutual contact among Ashram women is very essential.

The two American ladies who stayed with you for a day also came here. They left yesterday after staying here for three days. They are mother and daughter. The daughter is unmarried and is twenty-five years old. She teaches a senior class in a college of five hundred girls. She has been sent by her Principal to study how moral education is given in different parts of the world. Her mother accompanies her as her guardian. Both of them move about the world without fear. How I wish that we had such fearlessness and such devotion to work as this young woman's!

Mirabehn's life should set all of you thinking. You must be receiving her letters in Hindi. From her

letters to me, I find that she has won the hearts of the Gurukul girls by her simple and affectionate nature. She has made herself one with the girls. She has been teaching them carding and spinning very well. She does not waste a single moment. I am hoping for such devotion, sacrifice and purity from all of you. Is it too much to hope that after becoming adept in your work and having learnt to live pure and simple lives, you will spread yourselves and work throughout India? Every moment I feel the great need of women workers. We find many self-sacrificing men. But self-sacrificing women in public work are hardly to be seen. Woman is the embodiment of self-sacrifice. But at present her self-sacrifice is restricted to her family. Why should she not make for the nation even greater sacrifices than those she has been making for her family? In the end, of course, she who is devoted to Dharma, will sacrifice herself for the whole world. But one's country is the first stage in the process. And when the good of one's country does not run counter to the interests of the world, service in the cause of one's country does take one towards salvation. My request to you this week is that all of you should think seriously over this.

I send this letter to Tarabehn since Manibehn may not be there. But I wish that you should appoint someone as leader from amongst yourselves.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

20-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

I have received Chi. Radha's letter written on behalf of all of you. It is good that you have appointed Gangabehn as your leader. But may I draw your attention to the need to help her now that you have appointed her as your leader? By choosing an illiterate sister as your leader you have given due importance to character and sacrifice. This is as it should be. Knowledge is useless in the absence of character. Never have any doubt about this.

A leader is the greatest servant. A king gets authority to order only when he has risen to the greatest heights in the capacity to serve. His orders would then be, not for his self-interest, but for the good of the community. Today irreligion parades as religion. Therefore, kings instead of being self-sacrificing are self-indulgent, and rule only to such ends. But you have appointed Gangabehn as your leader from the point of view of service. Thus, all of you have decided to try and become servants and Gangabehn is the chief servant among you.

Remember that you are all tied to our motherland with the strands of hand-spun yarn. If you give up spinning, you also give up the service of the nation. Therefore, never forget the spinning-wheel. In our times, God resides in the spinning-wheel. Starvation stalks the country like a forest fire. I do not see any other help against it except through the spinning-wheel. God always reveals Himself to us in some

visible form. Therefore, we sing in our hymn about Draupadi * for whom 'God took the form of raiment.' Anyone who desires to see God today may see Him in the form of the spinning-wheel.

I have already exceeded my limit of two pages. I cannot meet my other commitments if I become too tempted to write to you. I have been sending to Chi. Maganlal all the letters from Mirabehn. I wish all of you would listen carefully when they are read out to you. Try to understand and think over them. To me at present she is an ideal woman worker amongst us.

*

*

*

I do not write anything about my health, because it is very good. Jamnalalji and Janakibehn are protecting me and affording me peace and quiet. I seem to have gained four pounds. I am able to eat well. I always eat a little of what Ba had prepared for me. I have still some of it left.

I leave this place tomorrow. Mithubehn, Jamnabehn and Perinbehn are coming here for the work of Khadi. I shall meet them at Gondia. You should find out from the map where Gondia is.

Dakshabehn and the German lady left yesterday — one for Bardoli and the other for Banaras.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* In the Mahabharata, Draupadi was a woman of great purity and devotion. Her enemies sought to dishonour her and tried to pull off her sari in the presence of all assembled. But God Krishna protected her in that as the garments were removed they became endless and could not be unwound completely.

Gauhati,
Monday, 27-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

Instead of writing to you in the early morning as usual, I am writing this just before the mail is to go. The mail leaves here early.

The scene around here is very beautiful. Our hut is built right on the bank of the Brahmaputra ; Kaka Saheb would love to live in this cottage here if only he were to see it. The roof is thatched by straw. The walls are made of slats of bamboo which grows everywhere. The bamboo is plastered with clay. The insides of the wall are covered with blue Khadi. There is no cot inside, but there is an improvised platform — a raised wooden plank with bamboo legs. Over it is spread straw ; then a carpet and on the carpet, a Khadi sheet. On this I sit, eat and sleep. It is big enough to accommodate four more, but no one else sleeps on it. The floor of the hut, too, is covered with straw, on which is spread a carpet, which again is covered with Khadi. Who would not like to live in a hut like this ? It becomes useless in the monsoon. But it costs very little, takes only a day or two to build, and requires no great skill. This is true with all art. It is as simple as it is natural.

It is quite damp and cold here, but if one is physically active one does not fall ill.

More next time, whatever comes to my mind at that time.

Blessings from Bapu

Sodepur,
3-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

This time I have not yet received your weekly letter. We have moved today to the new buildings built on the land purchased by the Khadi Pratishthan. Many small houses have been erected here. The processes of washing, bleaching and dyeing Khadi with the aid of machines are carried out here. There was a big meeting yesterday. The attendance was very good. I thought I should ask the gathering for a collection ; I did and collected about Rs. 3,500.

Prayers here are held just in the same way we hold them. The verses which they recite are also the same. But the recitation is less timeful than ours and so it jars a little on the ear. But gradually that will also improve.

Perinbehn, Mithubehn and JamnabeHN are still with us. They are carrying on their work for Khadi. They have already sold about half the stock they had brought with them.

It is very good that your prayers are going on regularly. I also find that they are well attended. Do not forget that spinning is *yajna* (sacrifice). The Gita says that he who eats without offering *yajna*, eats stolen food. *Yajna* means work done for the sake of others. For us spinning is such public work.

Blessings from Bapu

Kashi,
10-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

I received the letter written by Chi. Radha only yesterday. I find that your seven o'clock prayers are going on regularly and that you are all interested in them. It gladdens me.

What Kakasaheb has said is certainly worth bearing in mind. Instead of merely saying 'yes' or 'no' and stopping at that, we should develop the ability to understand and explain the reasons for our replies.

Yesterday was the death anniversary of Shraddhanandji. Pandit Malaviyaji is in Banaras at present. He sent word at the last minute that we should go to the Ganga-ghat for a bath and prayers. I got ready and took with me the students of the Rashtriya Vidyapith who had come to see me. We formed ourselves in twos and started. Malaviyaji joined us and our procession slowly swelled. I do not have enough time to describing the Ganga-ghat. But it is a moving sight, although the ghat is not as clean as I would like.

After the bath we went to offer our prayers at the Kashi Vishvanath temple. Mahadev will perhaps give you a description of other things there. The German lady was with us. It was doubtful whether she would be allowed to enter the temple. She is a Buddhist and hence can be regarded as a Hindu. How could she be denied entry? I had decided that if she was refused, I too would not enter. But the priests kept quiet when they were told that she was a Hindu.

How can I describe the dirt and filth in the road to the Kashi Vishvanath temple ?

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

7

Day of Silence

17-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter. I always write to you on Mondays ; but as I move from place to place, the day on which you receive my letters will be different. Till now I was in the south of the Ganga. Yesterday I shifted to its north, and hence had to cross the Ganga. From Patna we crossed over to the other side by boat. A car awaited us on the other side and took us to Sonapur.

The soil here is not like clay ; it has a mixture of sand in it. It, therefore, feels soft like velvet to the feet. Ba and I walked barefoot for about a mile. We liked to walk on the sand in these parts. Mother Ganga brings new soil every year. For hundreds of miles she carries mud and silt with her and depositing them here, she runs away towards the sea as though she wanted to avoid feeling embarrassed by being told by someone of the great good she was doing.

Today we are in Rajendrababu's town. Rajbansi * and Devadas † are here. Chandramukhi and Vidya-vati are at present in Chhapra, the town where he (i.e. Rajendrababu) lives. We met them in Chhapra. The two are in fairly good health — Chandramukhi

* The wife of Rajendrababu.

† Gandhiji's youngest son.

slightly worse than in the Ashram and Vidyavati slightly better.

Yesterday in the ladies' meeting I started something new. Women here wear heavy silver ornaments; they keep their children dirty and do not comb the children's hair. I criticised their habit of wearing ornaments. The result was that some of them gave away their anklets, necklaces etc. to me, and promised that they would neither buy nor wear them in future. While doing this, I thought of all of you very much. Ba is a great help to me in this; but that is because she agrees with me in this. You can do work of this kind better than I. But it requires self-sacrifice, enthusiasm and facilities. All these things are possible for you there. Do we not recite — आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु — that we are to regard all creatures as our own selves? If we think and feel in this way, when we see somebody's children dirty, we would feel as if our own children are dirty and would feel ashamed; on finding someone else miserable, we would feel ourselves miserable and begin to look for a way of removing the misery.

But I have exceeded my limit. Much as I like to go on, I am scared when I see the pile of correspondence lying before me. Find out from a map where Patna, Sonapur, and Chhapra are. This is the land where King Janaka* used to live.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Can you tell me with whose permission Ganga-behn Zaveri let her ankle to be sprained? If Hariichchlia does not put in sufficient attendance

* One of the characters in the *Ramayana*.

due to laziness, it can only mean a matter for punishment.

Bapu

8

Bettiah,
24-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

We are in Bettiah today. This is the town where I stayed most of the time in 1917 for my work in Champaran. There are groves of mango-trees in this area and they look very lovely. There are legends about Rama and Sita connected with almost every place. But it is not possible for me to spend time describing all these things to you.

I see that your class has been growing. I agree entirely with Kakasaheb's suggestion. If the Ashram does not train women workers devoted to true service, where else can they be trained? Have you asked yourselves this question? We may not have sufficient health, ability or learning for doing such work. But if we have absolute devotion all else will follow. Devotion means faith—faith in God and in one's self. Such faith will lead one to make all sacrifices. Sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice is difficult, but if it is made in the service of others, it is easy. No mother would want to sleep in the wet for its own sake. But she would gladly do so if she can thereby find her child a dry place to sleep.

I find that this year I shall not be able to live in the Ashram for any length of time. I am sorry about this. But we should find happiness even in adversity. I shall have to wander about in the work for Khadi.

Only by wandering in this way can I carry the message of Khadi to millions of our people.

Blessings from Bapu

9

31-1-'27

Sadakat Ashram, Patna

Dear Sisters,

Monday is here once again. But I have not yet received your letter. I am writing to you from Patna. It is very quiet here. The Vidyapith, so dear to Rajendrababu, is located here. It is situated among the fields on the bank of the Ganga. There are no other buildings around. The scene is rather attractive on the whole. Owing to the annual day of the Vidyapith, teachers and boys have come from all places. All the Ashram buildings are, therefore, full.

I am going to add to your work and to that of the Ashram. The women-folk of the workers here are more helpless than our women. Some of them want to come there for a short time. I do not intend to stop them. On the contrary I am encouraging them to go. I am sure that if some of them came there, you would welcome them, and cheerfully undertake to look after them. The idea in sending them there is that they may get to know things by living with you and learn spinning and carding. It is my hope that on their return they will work among the women here.

If any of you have anything to suggest in this matter, you may certainly do so. Check me if I am in too great a hurry. One who is in distress does not

stop to weigh and consider. Think of me as one such. I cannot bear to see the helpless state of these women. We, too, are somewhat helpless there; but these people here are even more helpless.

Blessings from Bapu

10

Akola,

7-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

Today I am observing my day of silence in the midst of the members of our Ashram family. Kishorlalbhai, Gomatibehn, Nathji, Tulsimehar, and Tara — are not all these to be regarded as belonging to our Ashram? And who could regard Nanabhai, his wife and Sushila as outsiders? So this week do not expect me to write anything except about them.

Gomatibehn still has low fever, and is confined to bed. But she is cheerful; no one could say from her face that she is recovering from a long and serious illness. The reason for this cheerfulness is her faith. May we all have such faith!

Kishorlalbhai is getting along as usual. It cannot be said that he is stronger. He, too, had fever and shivering last night. The fever lasted for a short time and then subsided.

Whenever there is illness in this family, Nathji cannot but be in their midst.

Nanabhai is rarely in good health. He suffers much from asthma but his face shows great calm.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Dhulia,
14-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter written by Chi. Manibehn Patel.

What you write to me in regard to the women who want to come and visit the Ashram is quite right. For the present I cannot expect any of you to put them up. I only wish that you would mix freely with them, look after them if they are unwell, not make them feel cut-off, and invite them occasionally to your homes.

You might have known that Tara's elder sister Sushila has been betrothed to Manilal *. The wedding will take place in Akola on 6th March. I shall, therefore, reach the Ashram on the evening of the 8th or on the morning of the 9th. 14th is a Monday. I shall stay on in the Ashram till then and go away again. So I shall have only a few days to spend in the Ashram.

Whether I like it or not, I get involved like this in marriages. And yet the more I have to do with this business, the more I feel how very necessary it is for men and women to observe celibacy. Manilal has remained unmarried until he is thirty-two, entirely in order to develop self-control. He has now expressed a desire to marry, and so I began looking for a good match. As he is to marry in a family of persons devoted to God, I expect nothing but good to result from this alliance.

* Gandhiji's second son.

We should not feel embarrassed in speaking about marriage. But whether married or unmarried, we should not become too excited or obsessed about it. Those who cannot control their urges should certainly marry. But those who can control them, should continue to do so and seek to obtain salvation in this very life.

Blessings from Bapu

12

Sholapur,
21-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter.

I find that your carding work has been going on well. If you work regularly in the same way, you will make good progress within a short time.

The effect of well-regulated work on the mind is the same as that of well-regulated diet on the body. But just as over-eating impairs one's health, excessive work at a time wears out one's spirit.

We are in Sholapur at the moment. It is a big city. There are five mills here. The biggest of them belongs to Morarji Gokuldas. His grandson Shantikumar is still a young man so far as age goes, but he has a great soul. He loves Khadi and wears only Khadi. I do not mean that this is his greatest virtue. He is sympathetic, generous, humble, devoted to God and truth. He has the virtue that his name indicates, i.e. he is serenity incarnate. I am very glad that such a jewel amongst men is found in a multi-millionaire family. I had not known his wife very well. Yesterday while eating, I made her sit by me and talked to her to my heart's content. I suggested to her that she

should take up public work like her husband. I cited all of you as examples to her. Was I correct in doing this or was it only my conceit? You alone know whether all of you are full of the spirit of service. Anyhow that is what I have blurted out. It is now in your hand to prove it true.

Monday

Blessings from Bapu

13

Malvan,
28-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

This is the last letter I shall write to you, for next Monday I should be on my way to you.

In these tours women's meetings are usually held. Consequently I come across new experiences and questions in regard to women. I realise that women hold the key to Swaraj. But who will awaken them? Many women are inactive. Who will make them industrious? Mothers spoil their children from birth. Who will prevent them? They load their children with ornaments and clothes of different kinds. They get their girls married quite young. They give them in marriage to old men. When I look at these ornaments on women, I feel nothing but distress. Who will explain to them that real beauty lies in the heart and not in these ornaments? I might go on writing about such matters. But how can all this be set right? It can be done only when a Draupadi of dazzling lustre rises from among women. You have to try hard and acquire the necessary strength. First make

up your mind and then work patiently. One cannot achieve anything by being in too great a hurry.

Blessings from Bapu

14

14-3-'27

Dear Sisters,

Parting this time was particularly hard as I was keen to talk to you about many things, and to exchange views with you. But who is after all free? We are in God's hands and we dance as He makes us dance. If we are free, acting according to our own desires, we shall come to grief. Thus, although my desire was not fulfilled, I do not worry. We shall meet again when He desires. Till then we shall talk things over by means of letters.

This is what I immediately would like you to do :

1. Acquire a methodical and sound knowledge of carding and spinning — so well that you may be able to teach others.

2. Look after the common kitchen and make it an ideal place. For the present I do not desire that any one of you should devote herself always to this work, but since it is something which you really know, I entrust to you the responsibility of seeing that the cooking is good and that the kitchen is neat and clean.

These two tasks are just the right ones for you. Are they not?

Mirabai will leave today for Rewari Ashram, where Jamnalalji's daughter also lives.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Nipani,
28-3-'27

Dear Sisters,

Do not worry yourselves about my sudden illness *. Today it was only a slightly dangerous. In a few years life itself may pass away. But what does it matter? The Gita clearly teaches us and we also experience it daily that those who are born, die and those who die, are born again. Every one repays his debt more or less and passes away.

I will tell you how perfectly true this is. If it were not for passion there would be no disease. A person who has no passions is also fated to die. But he quietly drops like a ripe fruit. I hope and wish that I too should drop out like that. I keep hoping but who can tell? Passions I still have and they continue playing their part. One never knows when one will be completely free of them and attain the state of perfect tranquillity.

Devote yourselves entirely to your duties. Youth is given to us to conquer passions. We should not allow it to pass fruitlessly. Safeguard your purity. Do not give up the spinning wheel. As far as possible do not also leave the Ashram.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* This was the first occasion Gandhiji had a rather severe attack of blood-pressure.

11-4-'27

Dear Sisters,

You have absolved me from writing to you. But how can I take advantage of it unless it is very necessary? I am not in such bad health that I cannot write to you. Yesterday I even walked a good distance. To write to you is not too much of a strain.

Have you decided to supervise the common kitchen by turn? Lakshmibehn* had already expressed her willingness to do so. If no one else has yet taken up the work, at least she should do it. If there is any defect in the common kitchen, it will be the fault of you all. Will it not? You may free yourselves from kitchen work when the men have acquired as much skill as you have at present, but certainly not before.

Mirabehn's letter is enclosed with this. Give it to Chi. Manilal. I have sent it because it is worth reading.

Blessings from Bapu

* The wife of Shri N. M. Khare, the musician. She had experience of running a common kitchen at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Bombay.

18-4-'27

Dear Sisters,

In the absence of Gangabehn I am sending this letter to your secretary. Whenever Gangabehn is away you should appoint an acting leader. Your work should now be as perfectly organised as to go on automatically as in other institutions. In order to ensure this, a leader is absolutely necessary. A leader should have few powers but many more responsibilities; she should always be thinking of the good of the institution, and try to increase its capacity for service.

It appears that you celebrated the National Week very successfully. It was good that you also took over the cleaning of latrines. You should continue taking up fresh responsibilities according to your strength.

Maintain your contact with women who work outside the Ashram. You must be in touch with Rajibehn and Champavatibehn. Write to me if you know how Rajibehn is getting on with her work.

My health appears to be improving. To this end I am making a simple experiment. If it proves successful, it will have many uses. But I do not want to take your time by describing it to you now. I may perhaps venture to tell you about it next week.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

25-4-'27

Dear Sisters,

It looks as though you gave me permission to stop writing to you, because you yourselves did not wish to write to me. Or is it because there is confusion in your Mandal for want of a new president, just as chaos might prevail in a country where there is no king?

Whatever it may be, how is it possible for me to eat and drink and move and yet not think of you? None of you has written anything about Gangadevi. I take it, therefore, that she is now restored to normal health. You must inform me if any of you falls ill with anything.

There are at present men as well as women in the Ashram. But suppose, some day there are no men, and thieves and such others attack the Ashram. Have you ever thought about what you would do in such an event? If you have not thought about it already, please do so now and let me know. Do not imagine that such an occasion will never or nowhere arise. It does happen many a time in our small villages. It happens often in South Africa.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

2-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have now received plenty of hand-made paper. Even though the size of the paper is a little smaller than what you would like, I believe you will prefer hand-made paper. Our duty today, of course, consists in using hand-made cloth; because from it our starving masses obtain their bread. There are very few people who can make paper. Yet so long as we find something that is made in our country and it is good, we must get it and use it.

It is very good that you have set apart some money for postage. It does not matter if the amount is small; but keep regular accounts, and those of you who can, should learn thereby how to keep accounts.

I find your progress in another direction also praiseworthy. Last week I raised the problem of protecting yourselves against thieves. Do not lightly brush it aside. I wish you to falsify the epithets like 'weak' 'timid' etc. which are specially used for women. They do not apply to all women. Who would call the women of Raniparaj 'timid'? How are they weak? The women of the West, these days go in for almost everything. I would not like to say that this should be imitated; but at least they have falsified many of the presumptions of men. The Negro women of Africa are not at all 'timid'. There is even perhaps no such epithet for them in their language. In Burma it is the women who carry on business of every kind.

I raised this matter of burglars, not in order to frighten you, but only to make you think calmly over it. In the Ashram we all desire to have true experience of the soul. Now the soul is neither male nor female ; neither young nor old. The scriptures as well as our experience tell us that these are attributes only of the body. The same soul pervades you and me. Then how shall I be able to protect you ? Is it not by learning the art of protecting myself ? Only then I can teach it to you. This is enough for you to think over at present. If I still feel sufficiently worked up about this. I shall take up the subject again.

If any one of you wants to write to me, she is welcome to write. I hear that Valjibhai has discouraged all of you from writing to me. Don't get discouraged.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu



Nandi Durg,
9-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

What you have to say about thieves seems to be correct. For the present, it is enough if you try to forget that you are the weaker sex. None of you should, by any means, make the mistake of taking me to mean that men should give up their duty of protecting women. Because woman tries to come into her own, man should not conclude that she has yet become capable of protecting herself ; a man, who by thinking so, fails to protect women, is nothing but a shameless coward. He should be regarded as less than a man. Man has kept woman in a state of helplessness and dependence ; so it continues to be his duty to protect her. We are trying in the Ashram to make both men and women alert and independent of each other. But this ideal is still far off. What I write to you in order that you might be more receptive and ready for greater responsibility is one thing ; this has not to be confused with the duty which men in the Ashram owe to you. So as long as there is one man alive in the Ashram, you should regard yourselves as fully protected.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

16-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

I am very glad to know that you are not afraid. Why should one fear who knows that God is the Protector of all? By saying that God is the Protector of all I do not mean that none would be able to rob us or that no animal will attack us. It is no slur on God's protection if such things happen to us; it is only due to our lack of faith in Him. The river is forever ready to give water to all. But if one does not go near it with a pot to get water, or avoids it thinking its water poisonous, how can that be the fault of the river? All fear is a sign of lack of faith. But faith cannot be developed by means of reasoning. It comes gradually through quiet thinking, contemplation and practice. To develop such faith, we pray to God, read good books, seek the company of the good and take to sacrificial spinning at the wheel. He who has no faith will not even touch the spinning-wheel.

I am getting better.

Blessings from Bapu

3041

23-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

You have taken on yourselves the management of the store. I regard it as a great step forward. Stick diligently to the work. God will help you to succeed. There are a number of such tasks that you can take up and bring credit to the Ashram. But I am in no hurry about it. Since your intentions are sincere, you will gradually take up many new duties of your own accord. For the present concentrate upon making the management of the store a complete success. Get to know even the smallest detail connected with it. You must of course learn how to keep accounts. Do not imagine that it is difficult. It is quite easy to write or understand accounts. The main trouble may be in additions. If one does not know the arithmetical tables or used to long addition, one would certainly get into a tangle. But addition comes with practice. Learn addition, subtraction, multiplication and simple division, whoever of you does not already know. This does involve a little hard work but the rest is all very easy. If one really wants to do it, one would find it even interesting.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

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Nandi Durg,
30-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

There is no letter from you this week.

Do you receive any letters from Mirabehn? I find from her letters that she has been working hard among both men and women. There is one theme in her letters which I would like you to know. She writes that the women with whom she comes in contact are all extremely good, but at the same time dismally ignorant. They do not know even the simplest things. If Mirabehn talks to them of the spinning-wheel, they are amazed. They also cannot understand that spinning is necessary in the interests of the poor. Their idea of religion is a visit to the temple. They hardly know anything about what 'service' means. It may be that a part of Mirabehn's impression is due to the lack of mutual understanding. But the terrible ignorance of our women about even the most ordinary things is well known. We also know that it is men who are mainly responsible for it. The only hope for it is for women to rouse themselves; is it not? This responsibility rests upon you. Every one of you should prepare yourselves for the work according to your abilities.

Blessings from Bapu

Bangalore,
6-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have reached Bangalore today. I do not feel tired out. Doctors examined me; they say I should be all right within a month.

What Ramaniklalbhai suggests is quite right. There are so many books that are worth reading. The selection may be made by any one; after all everything depends upon the interest that one who reads to others can create in his listeners. None of you should pass over any portion of the book which you do not understand. You should ask for the meaning again and again if necessary until you understand it. Many other things become clearer if you understand even one thing thoroughly.

I like the bangles made by Manibehn Patel out of Khadi cloth. I have suggested that the bangles should be made, not of Khadi, but out of yarn. The Raksha * is also a kind of bangle and it is always made of yarn. One can put as much art and colour in making a yarn bangle as one likes. And I am sure that the innocent pleasure one gets from wearing a thing prepared with careful art by one's own hand can never be had by putting on even a diamond-studded bangle costing thousands of rupees.

* *Raksha* — silk or cotton thread which sisters tie round the wrist of their brothers on the Coconut Day.

Tell Hirabehn that if she really wants to study, she should go to Jakibehn regularly and not only when it is convenient for her.

Blessings from Bapu

25

13-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

Some time ago you wrote to me how all of you take your turn in leading the prayers by reciting the Sanskrit verses. I have yet to congratulate you upon this practice. I do hope your pronunciation is correct. Of course God does not take into account whether His name is uttered with the correct or the uneducated accent. He only cares for the language of the heart. If the heart is pure, even stammered prayers are rated cent percent. While I am on this topic I might as well tell you about a few of the pleasant experiences that I am having here.

Mysore is a part of Karnatak, which gave us Kakasaheb. The women here know both music and Sanskrit very well. I first heard their singing in Nandi. I also listened to singing and recitation of Sanskrit by two ladies here the day before yesterday. They sang a summary of the Ramayana in correctly spoken Sanskrit verse. I think there were more than a hundred verses. I could not detect a single flaw in their recitation. One of them is still a student. She also knows the meaning of the verses. Do you know why did I write all this to you? I value the work you are doing there now as more important than a study of Sanskrit. If you become fearless, remain pure,

prove to be good social workers and live and work together, it will mean an education superior to any other. If in addition, it is accompanied by a study of Sanskrit, it will be sweeter even than nectar.

Do Gangabehn and others get my letter or a copy of it to read.

Blessings from Bapu

26

Bangalore,
20-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

Because I praised bangles made of yarn does not mean that all of you should immediately start wearing them. Such innovations will endure only if they come from the heart. And I wish that none of you should take up anything unless your mind is fully prepared for it, merely out of the embarrassment of not conforming.

At present I daily visit a dairy. It has set up many trains of thought in my mind — one of which I shall put down here. Just as you have undertaken the work of the store, so also you can help to run these milk-production centres. Thousands of our cattle perish because of our ignorance and indifference. I find that this kind of work can be done as easily by women as by men. I am reminded of the Rabari women in Saurashtra who are as hardy and strong as horses. We in the Ashram already are farmers, weavers and sweepers; we need to be cowherds too.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Sunday night,
26-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter and the attendance book. Please do continue to send me the attendance book. I get to know so many things from it.

I have been able to get a great deal of news about you from Manibehn. I hope you will carry on without any hitch the work in the store. We regard the Ashram as our family, and through it we try to learn to look upon our country and then, the whole world as one family. You should work together in the store just as in a family where we share one another's responsibilities even if it means some inconvenience.

Do not let my suggestions like that of service of the cow frighten you. I shall go on writing whatever suggests itself to me. You can pick out whatever you like to do or can do and take it up when you get an opportunity.

Even among the virtuous, a death like that of Valjibhai's mother is rare.* Blessed is the son, blessed is the mother, and blessed is the Ashram where such a death took place. I am reminded also of Vrajlalbhair's noble end†

Blessings from Bapu

* The mother of Valjibhai Desai, crossed the Sabarmati river for going to the city from the Ashram, and died in the lap of her son, after reaching near the cremation ground on the opposite bank.

† Vrajlalbhair was drowned as he was trying to retrieve someone's pot out of a well.

Bangalore,
4-7-'27

Dear Sisters,

Yesterday I particularly remembered you. For exhibitions and such other things are really more the work of women than of men. No one was able to decorate his or her stall as well as Mithubehn. It is just as one might expect; because for all the hours of the day she keeps thinking how Khadi can be made more beautiful. Under her guidance, about four hundred girls now work on Khadi and earn their livelihood, or wear only Khadi spun by themselves.

Manibehn has been able to bring credit to herself and to the exhibition by means of her carding bow.

Since many Ashram people have arrived here the oral recitation of the Gita in the mornings has started. Today Manibehn recited the fourth chapter. Her pronunciation is good. Indeed all of you should learn to read the Gita in the proper way and with understanding. Just as a woman who cannot cook is not accomplished, so also it is no exaggeration to say that a woman who does not know the Gita, is not accomplished.

Who is in charge of the store at present?

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Bangalore,
11-7-'27

Dear Sisters,

Manibehn will tell you about how many women took part in the exhibition, and what they did. I shall only say that one of them was expert in keeping accounts while some others proved equally good at selling Khadi. They have received silver and gold medals. In the exhibition a blind woman could be seen spinning exceedingly well. She was the centre of attraction for all. One lady stood first by spinning very fine, strong yarn and got a gold medal. Manibehn upheld the good name of the Ashram. Her carding attracted the attention of all.

There was also a Hindi Sammelan * here. In the competitions there too, a lady stood first. Some of the women here are making admirable efforts to learn Hindi.

All this awakening is coming on very well in this State. I have already written to you about the ladies who sing beautifully at our evening prayers. On Saturday one of them played on the *vina* for me. She herself composes *bhajans*.† She is reported to be a very good *vina*-player.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* Conference.

† Hymns.

Dear Sisters,

I have many letters to write today. But how can I omit writing to you ?

Today I propose to kill two birds with one stone. Now this is an English saying. The use of such expressions becomes current mainly where such kind of violence is quite common. Though I have used the saying, I do not of course mean to approve of any violence. All I want to say is that I wish to serve two purposes by writing this letter.

My twofold purpose is :

To write my usual letter to you and to include in it a reply to Chi. Vasumati's letter to me. She asks, " You say that women should know how to read and recite the Gita as well as they know how to cook. How is this possible ? It will take so much time."

Indeed it will take time. But what can one not achieve with perseverance ? Even if one gives a little time regularly, one's work will be properly done. It is also difficult to learn cooking after you are grown up. Even then you can learn it if you have patience. If our women cannot pronounce Sanskrit well, the fault is not theirs. It is either of their parents' fault and if they are married, of the elders in their husbands' families. But what good is our putting the blame on others ? It is for us to see how we can remove the defect. In the Ashram we live to look for our own defects and then try to remedy them. Of course we should not overdo the business of learning to pronounce Sanskrit correctly. We should continue carrying out the daily duties in the Ashram, and

while carrying them out we should also try and improve our pronunciation.

Don't you see that what I wanted you to know was that in the Karnatak many women pronounce Sanskrit better than even men in Gujarat.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

31

Bangalore,
25-7-'27

Dear Sisters,

I will write in this letter about your attendance at the special class for ladies. I find considerable irregularity in your attendance. In the Ashram, your social life and lessons in social service begin with these women's classes. Therefore, just as we do not give up taking our meals every day except when there is illness or some such extraordinary circumstance, so also we may be absent from the classes only for such unavoidable reasons. You have taken a vow to attend the classes regularly. Then how can you break that vow? Just as the body can be sustained only by observing the rules of physical health, an institution or society can be sustained only if its rules are observed. There can be no two views about this. Will you not, therefore, promise me and yourselves that you will not absent yourselves except for reasons which no one can consider doubtful?

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

1-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

I hope none of you became panicky on account of all that rain,* and flood. Such occasions come in order to test whether we have properly learnt the lessons of life. If, even after all our best efforts the Ashram were to be swept away by the flood it would not have really mattered. And one can say the same thing about the whole of Ahmedabad. The wonder is that so much has remained safe in spite of such torrential floods. But after all, who knows whether we gain more by saving what we have or by losing. It may be that what has been saved has really been lost and what has been lost has really been saved. But everyone likes to be saved, and we are thankful to God, when we are saved. Actually, however, one should thank God for everything that transpires. That is what is meant by the state of equanimity.

But think of our losing Kantilal. How should we bear this grief? That also we must bear. One's intellect works in accordance with one's *karma*. If Kantilal has committed suicide, I think I can guess its reason somewhat. But we need not worry ourselves about the reason. For ourselves, we should make up our minds that we will never commit suicide. The kind of people who commit suicide either worry too much about worldly affairs, or try to hide their shortcomings from the world. We should never try to appear what we are not, or try to do what is clearly beyond us.

Blessings from Bapu

* This refers to the floods that affected Gujarat that year.

8-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

Today we are in a place some distance away from Bangalore. It is less cool, but more green here. This place is somewhat like Amboli.

Although I continue doing my work here, my thoughts hover round the Ashram and Gujarat. This is not a virtue, but a defect, since it shows undue attachment. There is not very much more I could have done if I were in the Ashram. There is very little I can do to help Gujarat. And yet my mind foolishly goes on thinking of such things. You should guard yourselves against this bad habit. There is, however, one condition to be satisfied before one can cultivate this type of detachment. He alone who is always absorbed in the performance of his duties can be allowed to be indifferent about other matters. The stone may be indifferent, but it is inanimate. As compared with it, we are animate. So only if we remain indifferent to other things because of our complete absorption in our immediate duties, may we be held to have lived successfully. Such steadiness of mind does not come about suddenly.

I explained to you my own defect in order that you may learn to avoid it completely. My language today may seem slightly difficult. If any word or idea in it is difficult to understand, please try your best to understand it.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Shimoga,
15-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

Today I must be brief. I have neither time nor anything special to write about.

I have been forgetting to answer your inquiries about Manibehn's return. Most probably she will start from here soon after the 20th, and stopping at Poona and Bombay for a day each, she will reach Broach and from there go to the Ashram.

We are being tested quite hard in the Ashram at present. All of you should become and continue to be brave. Our responsibilities are very great. So long as we always have God in our hearts, no harm can ever befall us.

Kakasaheb feels better in this place.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

22-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

It is very good that you are going to contribute to the Flood Relief Fund by doing work such as sewing. Get the women labourers of the Ashram also to co-operate in this work. I do not mean that they should necessarily sew but if they like, they can contribute a day's wages. It will be enough for the present if you only make their acquaintance on account of this. They need not give anything if they are unwilling even to the slightest extent. We should realise at this time how we have so far failed to enter into their lives ; thereafter, contacts with them will increase in the future. We have to develop in ourselves the quality which enables us to look upon all as equals as laid down in the Gita.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

29-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

You have really not understood my point. There were several things implied in my letter. It is always so in letters. If those implications in my letter were made explicit, this is what it would come to :-

When we are engaged in a particular type of service, we should not think of other fields of service so long as it is not essential. If we do so, it would be regarded as either vanity or delusion. Here I am doing a necessary piece of service as well as is possible for a sick man to do. If at such a time I think of Gujarat flood relief or of the Ashram problems and how I would solve them if I were there, that would be delusion. If you were in a similar position it would be true of you too. There is no question of one's being great or small. You are fully engaged there doing service. Suppose I fall ill, very ill, or suppose there were floods here, as bad as those in Gujarat, it would be fatuous of for you to think of running down here for no useful purpose, even though you are not as great or important as I. This does not in any way mean that you would have no feeling or sympathy for me or for the sufferers in the Madras floods. Sympathy there will and must be, so that your kind feeling for others does and should always find expression. But if it makes you restive, it is infatuation, and should be avoided. This matter must also be distinguished from the other problem of deciding when it becomes one's greater duty to leave one work unfinished and to rush to another. To do flood relief work, most of the members left the Ashram. That was clearly our duty.

And yet, for those who could not go, there was no need to feel perturbed. Ask me again if you do not still understand me.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

37

5-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

I hope you have understood the point of my suggestion that you should develop your contacts with the women labourers in the Ashram. Collecting a few coppers from them for relief work is the least important. The chief purpose is that by such occasions you may establish a bond of fellowship with them. You and they should get to know each other better and better, and all should share each other's joys and sorrows. I do not mean that you should spend too much time on this. It is really a matter of changing one's basic attitudes. It should be your heartfelt desire that they have the same food as we, and the same things to wear and that they, too, get everything we like to have and obtain for ourselves. We should try to make this desire real as and where it is possible.

Do not try to give everything that I write too wide a meaning and then feel overwhelmed by it. Words have at least two meanings—a narrow one and a broad one. We should try to comprehend the broader meaning, but begin to put into practice the narrow one, so as to avoid being overawed by it.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

12-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

I should not say I received your letter — it was no more than a note. I learn that you have appointed Gangabehn Zaveri as your President, since Kashibehn has left for Rajkot. The fact that you can get new Presidents as you need is some proof of your ability to run your organisation. I would take it as a sounder proof when you respect your President with all your heart and when all of you work in perfect accord in running the organisation. Even menfolk have not as yet been able to acquit themselves well in this respect. We do not have to go far to see that even in our Ashram we all know that we have yet to learn how to run its affairs without the expression of unnecessary emotions. So it is not surprising that you also have not attained that stage. But if you persevere, I am sure you will acquire such capacity. Try your best to get rid of false attachment and anger. By such strivings are we certain to go on improving ourselves.

It is good that the older Gangabehn has gone away on relief work.

My work continues to make progress though slowly.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Trichinopoly,
19-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

I keep watching your work from here. One who works to his full capacity does all that can be expected. But in our work we should develop the Gita attitude which we desire to have. That attitude is that whatever we do, we do it selflessly in a spirit of service. Spirit of service means in a spirit of dedication to God. Such a person no longer thinks in terms like, "It is I who am doing this." He feels no ill-will towards anybody. On the contrary he is generous to others. Even about the smallest bit of service you render, you should keep asking yourselves whether you fulfil these ideals.

Ramniklalbhai raised a question about what I wrote to you about myself. You have not told me whether all of you understood what I wrote in reply. I wish that you would discuss whatever I write to you, and keep asking me any problems or questions which you might like to raise.

My health has so far kept up fairly well.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

26-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

You will not find today's letter boring. I have not been able to write till now of certain things that were uppermost in my mind. Instead, I kept on writing wise and polite letters, full of good advice. And you replied in a similar diplomatic manner. But these letters had hardly anything to do with you as ordinary men and women of flesh and blood. Our letters were not real replies to each other, but formal acknowledgments such as we get from the Government.

Today I wish to write to you about the quarrels that are going on among you in the Ashram. You do not have mutual trust and respect, and there are petty intrigues among you all the time. You and I knew of this, but neither dared to write about it. I felt I must lance this abscess. Why is there so much quarrelling among you? What is the cause of this enmity? Who are to blame? To all this you will have to find answers.

Religion declares that so long as man harbours evil he is impure and unfit to stand before God. So the first duty of any of you who has such thoughts is to confess about it and thus purge yourselves of the evil. The immediate cause of this letter is a casual letter from Manibehn. She was able to escape from this unpleasantness when she had to go away on flood relief work. But before she left she poured out all her distress in the postcard she wrote to me. She could not bear to see the disunion prevailing in the Ashram.

Please look into this, be watchful and bring credit to the Ashram.

If after reading this letter any one of you feels like writing a separate letter to me, she is welcome to do it.

Blessings from Bapu

41

3-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

The letter you have written this time was exactly the sort of reply I expected when I wrote to you last. The first step in purifying oneself is the admission and eradication of whatever bad feelings one might have about others. As long as we harbour ill-will or suspicion against our neighbours and do not strive to get rid of it, we cannot learn ever the first lessons of having genuine love for them. In the Ashram, we must have the strength and capacity to do at least this much.

Give still further thought to the matter of prayers. I also believe that the seven o'clock meeting should not be given up. You have taken it upon yourselves as a special duty to infuse life into these meetings. For the present I can only suggest this. Those of you who have the will and the energy to attend the 4 A.M. prayers may resolve to do so, without entering into any unnecessary discussion about what others might do, and thereafter, continue to keep your resolution, in spite of every hardship, so long as health permits.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

10-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

It appears my last letter has caused a good deal of commotion among you. That is perhaps why I have not as yet heard from you. I like this kind of commotion. I shall not feel satisfied if you continue meeting with one another merely on the basis of formal courtesy ; nor should you be satisfied with it either. We certainly do not want just to get on together somehow. We must become one in heart. We do not want to deceive ourselves, others, or the world. So whatever is working in our hearts must be brought out into the open. Once the heart is purified, it will take long for it to become impure again. But if any impurity is allowed to remain in the heart, even good thoughts will get sullied, just as water poured into a dirty vessel gets sullied. If we begin by having a suspicion about someone once, we often end by suspecting everything about him.

Blessings from Bapu

17-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter. I can quite see how all of you have become very uneasy. It was when I opened this question that I knew that you would feel agitated. But I found no other way of cleansing your minds of impurity. Now you should have patience. Everything will turn out well, and we shall enjoy new and real peace. We have formed ourselves into one family. What do we do when there is some unrest in the family? If we have true and tried people on either side of the dispute, each puts up with the other's anger, and tries to subdue his own. That is what we should also do. If everyone strictly does her duty, those who do not do it now will begin to do theirs, and if they do not, they will soon be separated like sheep from goats. Do take advantage of all this stir and learn to be generous towards each other. To be generous is having no anger against those whom we consider to be at fault, and loving and serving them. It is not the quality of generosity or love, if we have goodwill for others only as long as they are united with us in thought and action. That might be called merely friendship or mutual affection. The use of the word 'love' is wrong in such cases. 'Love' means friendly feeling for the enemy.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Diwali,* Tuesday,
25-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter. Do not lose heart. It would also be wrong to think in terms of everyone else becoming good before you can yourself become pure. On the contrary, the principle to be followed is: 'If I become pure, others too shall follow suit'. We have two proverbs about this idea. *Ap bhala to jag bhala* i.e.: 'If you are good, the world is good', and the other: 'As the individual, so the universe'. If it be not so, one can never have any hope for the world.

Rama has under his care the entire world. Sita's example is solace and mainstay of all women. So without being dejected, if every one of you strives to be pure, and remains devoted to her duty, you will find that everything else will straighten out in the end. "Defeat" should never find a place in our dictionary.

I am waiting to see what new resolves you are going to make on New Year's Day. Speak with one who does not speak with you; visit those who do not come to you; make up with someone who is angry with you. All these things are to be done not for their good but for your own. The world is a creditor, we are its debtors.

Blessings from Bapu

* The day for the festival of lights, on the eve of the Hindu new year.

31-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have once tried to write in ink ; but the train is moving so fast and shakes so much that I cannot. And yet, how can I miss writing to you my Monday letter ?

Never give up your efforts at remaining united. Success lies in the effort itself. God has promised that effort for the good never goes fruitless and all of us have had experience of this fact to some extent. You cannot now give up running the Ashram stores. You should not, out of fear, give up work once undertaken. There is no cause for fear or for defeatism. Even if a few of you gain experience and become expert in the work, there should be no hitch whatever ; if you give up the stores-work out of a feeling of defeatism, you will always feel unequal to take up any other work. Even if there are differences of opinion, annoyances and irritations, whatever work has to be done must be done. We should certainly not do less than what others do. I hope to see you within three or four days.

Blessings from Bapu

7-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

I am writing this letter in a steamer. It will only be posted two days later, but since I have got used to write to you on Mondays, I finish with this today.

This time I spent two very busy days in the Ashram. I was quite tired, but I did not particularly like to leave the Ashram.

You must have seen how the responsibilities of each of you are growing day by day. None of you should lose heart. Remain absorbed in your duties, and learn to get peace even where there is none around you. Our joy must lie in our devotion to duty, and not in the success of our efforts or in the circumstances. Narasinh Mehta has said : " If Man had the power to do everything, no one would be unhappy, for he would destroy his enemies and allow only friends to live ". But Man is a lowly creature. He can be great only when he gives up pride and becomes one with God. A drop of water in the ocean, by itself can serve no useful purpose ; but remaining in the ocean, it can share in bearing the heavy burden of this huge ship. In the same way, if we learn to merge our identity with the Ashram, and thereby with the world and with God, we may be said to be bearing the burden of the world . But in such a state, the ' I ' or ' Thou ' is abandoned, and only ' He ' remains.

When the ship is only a cargo steamer, it is a very quiet place to be in.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Colombo,
14-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

We reached Colombo on Saturday. I did expect some letter from you. But none has yet arrived although it is Monday.

This is a very pleasant land. Though it is outside India, it looks very much like it. Indians here are mostly from the South. They do not look very different from the local inhabitants. Women's clothes here are very simple; in fact it may be said that men and women dress more or less in the same way. Both put on *dhotis* in the manner in which our Surendra does. Only the *dhotis* here are coloured with a variety of designs on them. Both wear jackets, though there is a slight difference between them in the cut. Women are never without jackets, whereas many men are content to wear only *dhotis*. Malabar also has a similar dress, only the *dhotis* are not coloured. These costumes are bound to be cheap. If people in these two regions begin to look favourably at Khadi it should be quite easy for Khadi to be used for all their clothes.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

21-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have as yet not received any letter from you this week. I have had to move about so much in Ceylon that it is difficult to get my post quickly enough from Colombo.

When I look at the Ceylonese ladies, I am often reminded of our own Ashram women. I wrote to you how simple their dress generally is. On the other hand, women of higher social standing have grown so fashionable that you see nothing but silk and brocade on them. To my eyes, it does not become them at all. I keep asking myself, "By whom do these women want to be seen dressed up like this and for whose satisfaction?" There is no purdah system here.

Why women try to embellish themselves like this, you should be able to say better than I. But after seeing all this, I felt that it was good that we had established the tradition in the Ashram of having the fewest possible ornaments. I cannot honestly say that in the Ashram we have no attempts at ornamentation at all. Let me know whether you agree.

Blessings from Bapu

Jaffna,
28-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

This region is also Ceylon, but it is very different from South Ceylon. The people inhabiting this part are Tamilians from the south of India, and they observe Indian manners and customs. This part, therefore, is not different from the south of India. It is true that women here live in somewhat more freedom than those of South India.

There is a Gujarati couple here. The wife (Kashibai) belongs to a good family from Rajkot, and her husband is the son of the well-known Hara-govinddas Kantawala of Baroda. He is a District Judge here. They are well respected. Half of my food is sent over by Kashibai. So Ba may be said to be having something of a holiday.

We are to leave this place tomorrow. Where we are now going to is a land of living skeletons. I am anxious to see them once again. For it will help to stir my soul even further and to find the inner meaning of the spinning wheel.

Blessings from Bapu

Brahmapur

5-12-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have very little time to write today. I have no doubt whatever that there should be no ornaments in the Ashram. It is quite obvious that so long as there is terrible starvation in our land it is a sin for us to keep or put on even a single, small ring. Our clothes must be just sufficient to cover our nakedness and to protect us against heat and cold. All of you should try to achieve this ideal.

I shall not write further today about how the desire for ornaments arises. It also looks as though you have not quite understood my question.

How is it that Lakshmibehn is ill? She never used to.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Bolgadh,

12-12-'27

Dear Sisters,

There is profound quiet around me, but it is the peace of a sick-room. When I see the conditions here my heart burns within me, and I very much long to stay on here. If any of you is prepared to come here, I would certainly like to invite her. All the women here observe purdah. The people have neither enough clothes to wear nor food to eat. When Mirabehn suggested, before I went to Orissa, that we should have less clothes, I felt somewhat embarrassed. But when I see things here, I feel that her suggestion was indeed proper. Women here put on a single *dhoti*, one half covers the waist, and the other half the upper part of their bodies. They get neither milk nor ghee. They are always frightened. Due to some policeman's threat, they do not come anywhere near even me. I left Mirabehn in one house and went out; immediately about fifty women surrounded her and began to ask her all kinds of questions. If a woman works here among these women, I believe, she can do a great deal. But this is all for the future. For the present, all of you should get fully trained. Training means forgetting one's self. If you do that, you can go and work anywhere you like thereafter.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Cuttack,
19-12-'27

Dear Sisters,

God willing there will be only one more Monday for me to write to you.

I have received Manibehn's letter. You suggest that I should discuss the question of dress in greater detail. I shall not do so now, but you can certainly ask me about it when we meet. So long as we retain even a subconscious attraction for fineries, it is useless to give them up or making changes by seeing what others are doing. But if our infatuation for fineries passes off, and still the mind is drawn towards them, then we would make the necessary outward changes whether through a sense of guilt or by way of imitation of others, and ultimately root out this craving. Infatuation and such like, are our enemies; they harass us so much that we should protect ourselves from them with whatever help which might be secured from any appropriate quarter. I am writing all this for those who are honest and sincere. The Gita says somewhere that those who practise self-control outwardly, but crave for pleasures of the senses in their thoughts, are foolish and deceitful. This statement was particularly made for hypocrites. About those who are honest and sincere, the same Gita says that they should constantly control the instincts that agitate them.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Bardoli,
6-8-'28

Dear Sisters,

It appears settlement * is practically reached here. So I hope to reach there early. Vallabhbhai wants to keep me here for a few days more. Reliable information about the settlement will come tomorrow.

I have, no doubt, been thinking about the Ashram kitchen. I have been considering how you can take fuller interest and work more wholeheartedly. I feel that for that purpose it is necessary for you to shoulder the entire burden of running the kitchen. You should get what help you need. But you can take up the responsibility only when you feel sufficient confidence within you. All noise in the store-room and the kitchen must definitely cease. If Mirabehn were to be in there, she would find it difficult to work with so much noise about, and even Chhotelalji would be disturbed. People who sing Gita verses about being steadfast in wisdom must form the habit of working quietly. When we are rolling *chapatis* or cleaning rice, why cannot we withdraw into ourselves completely and remain fully absorbed in our work. But when you come and tell me that time will not pass unless you talk, I am quite helpless. Even then I must say that it is not necessary for you to make so much noise. Why can we not, while working, think over the significance of some verse we may have learnt that day? Reflect over all this, and do only what you think best.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* On the campaign by the peasants of Bardoli Taluka against increase in land-tax.

Wardha,
26-11-'28

Dear Sisters,

I may at once draw your attention to one thing I notice here. I am of course, dining in the Ashram kitchen here. By now I have been there for all the three meals in the day and found there never was noise when we were eating. It was perfectly quiet and I thought of the loud din in our Ashram kitchen. There was no clattering of pots and pans or of people talking. Of course, in our Ashram we have children, while here there are none. That does make some difference, and yet you can teach children not to make a noise and you can yourselves withstand the temptation to talk. That we cannot put a stop to the noise in our kitchen is one of our great failures.

I feel the separation from you all the more keenly because much has to be done in order to get more work from you. You should complete whatever remains unfinished.

Of course you understand your duties quite well. The kitchen, Balamandir (kindergarten) and prayers are even now going on; if you undertake any other responsibility besides these, never give it up out of a lack of confidence. For doing these things really well the most necessary condition of all is this:

Whatever work you once undertake, carry it out fully, never give up merely when you did not feel like it. If at any time you have to be absent, you must make some arrangement for your work to be done; and if no arrangement can be made, one should never omit doing it oneself.

Always keep cheerful ; be calm ; and make it a point to carry on your share of all the activities of the Ashram equally with men, and as well as men. This is not at all beyond your capacity. You need only desire it, and strive for it.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

55

Wardha,
3-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter written by Gangabehn. There is some point in what you write about the noise. But the responsibility for it lies not only with the children but also with adults. Again, it should really not be difficult for you to observe silence, or to teach the children to be quiet during meals or at work. The main thing is this : you should not take it for granted that if you do not talk, time will hang heavily or that children can never remain quiet. Millions of men do their work quietly. You know, do you not, that labourers in big factories have necessarily to keep silent while working ? Why cannot we do voluntarily what they have to do under compulsion ?

Hereafter Kakasaheb will be with you once a week. Do you still insist on Valjibhai's coming there too ? If I press him, he will come ; but I know that he is always busy and so, as a rule, I do not like to place any additional burden upon him if I can.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Wardha,
10-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

You will get news about me from my letter to the whole Ashram.

All that is wanted to put a stop to the noise in the kitchen is a firm resolve on your part. If you once take this decision, the noise must cease.

If you do not as yet feel at home with your work in the kitchen, let me remind you that it is not possible for you to think of doing any other work for another year. It is clear that the best thing for you to do is that you begin to take a liking for the work.

But the painful incident * that has just occurred must set all of you thinking. The incident can hardly be kept secret and it should not be. Therefore, I want to discuss it here. In this event no less than three of you were involved. It is needless to point with scorn at these three, because, whether men or women, all of us may become guilty of such mistakes at some time or other, or may have already committed such indiscretions in our life time. I want you to learn two lessons from this incident. In the first place, we should stick to our kitchen work, for it is through it that we came to know of the lapse. If we live in the seclusion of a home, we may never know our capacity

* This appears to refer to the occasion when some ladies cooked and ate some food outside the Ashram kitchen. It was not shared with everyone and was perhaps more tasty than the usual Ashram fare.

for sinning. It is revealed only when a suitable opportunity presents itself. In this case, there was such an opportunity and the wrong kind of company. Hence all the weaknesses came out in the open. The institution of the kitchen has in this way really proved a great boon. The second lesson is this : there was not enough courage to say or to do things openly, so theft and lying were resorted to. Why should we not do a thing we want to do, boldly ? Why be afraid of appearing as we actually are ? If we like tasty food, why hide that fact ? Having a taste for good food is no sin. The sin lies in our hiding the craving, and then in secretly indulging in it. Every one, man or woman, is free to eat whatever he or she desires. That was one of our objects in converting the Satyagraha Ashram into an *Udyogmandir* (Temple of Industry). Any one may satisfy his taste for food, the only limitation being that the good food prepared should be within the rules of the common kitchen. None should cook dishes to satisfy special tastes whether secretly or openly, in one's quarters. One may go out and eat at a friend's place, there is nothing to hide in this and no restriction about what one might eat. One may also keep eatables such as dried fruits etc. in one's room. It is better if such freedom is not availed of, but it is in no way binding. My earnest request to you is this : always seem what you are. Whatever you do, do it openly. Never allow yourself to be unduly influenced by another. But if ever you promise to do a thing even out of shame, never act contrary to it subsequently.

Everyone who goes to the kitchen must strictly follow her routine. It does not look as though you

have as yet been able to remove the fears of the elder Gangabehn. Every single activity in the kitchen must go on regularly like clockwork.

I have not read this letter through after writing.

Blessings from Bapu

57

Wardha,
17-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

There is no letter from you today. But I gather from your previous letters that it is now comparatively more quiet in the kitchen. Do not rest till you establish perfect quiet there. This work is mainly yours. Take upon yourselves the responsibility of making the kitchen attractive in every way. It can be regarded as the best part of an ideal school only when everyone dines in perfect quiet, when all do their work in it out of a sense of duty to be done well, and remain content with whatever is served in it. The whole institution is a kind of a school as you know, and our kitchen is where we learn how best to prepare our food. There the food should be scientifically stored, cooked, and eaten. Thus in every detail there should be cleanliness and a sense of discipline. We do not go there to eat for sensual satisfaction. The body is a temple of God ; as such it has to be kept clean and preserved by being nourished. If you learn to adopt such a frame of mind, all the differences we see in regard to cooking and eating will disappear. In my letter addressed to the whole of the Ashram, I have made four suggestions. Think over them and try to practise them if they appeal to you.

Kailas, Shila and other children must not fall ill at all. If any child is ill, do not think it is the concern and responsibility of only its mother, but take up responsibility for it on yourselves. It should be the normal custom in our Ashram whenever a mother is not able to nurse a sick child or does not know how, for anyone who knows the job to offer to look after the child. No mother should feel that she is all alone with nobody to help.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

58

Calcutta,
24-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

Today I have time only to write a short letter.

I have written a letter to Durgabehn. Please read it because it applies to all of you. You should learn a lesson from the death of Uma, namely, all the children of the Ashram are your own children. If one of them dies, take it that God has taken it away. If others are born, take it that God has sent them to you. Even when there is no addition to the number of children in the Ashram by new births, the coming of new families will always add to their number. If we learn to cherish the same love for each of them, we shall not feel the pain of the loss of Uma ; at the same time, we should try to understand its deeper meaning.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Calcutta,
31-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

Today I have only time to warn you that on arriving there I shall ask all of you to render an account of your work. Where is the need now to write anything new? If you have settled down, if you have been able to bring quiet to the kitchen, and if you are regular in attending your prayers, I should think that you have done a great deal.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Karachi,
4-2-'29

Dear Sisters,

I hope your classes are working regularly. I believe no better arrangements could have been made than what has come about without any special planning. Take full advantage of these arrangements.

Rasik's condition can only be described as very serious*. I do not know whether he will be among the living when this letter reaches you. But we try to learn every day that both birth and death are two facets of one and the same thing. He who is born has to die; he who dies is born again. Some do escape of this cycle of birth and death; but whether in or out of this cycle, one has no reason to feel

* Gandhiji's grandson.

pleasure or pain because of birth or death. I know this, and hence I go about freely without worries. Rasik has now become devoted to the Ramayana. This shows that his spirit has attained peace.

I wish you could improve the kitchen and the kindergarten. Do not tempt children to eat spiced food. You will find that such restraint will do them good in the future. By this time you must have noticed that there is generally no harm done to the body because you do not take spices. Of course it is a different matter if some who have got into the habit of eating spiced food cannot give it up. Think this over. To stop children from making a noise is entirely in your own hands. You must try and lighten the burden of Gangabehn. You may then be able to get her to do some other work also. But you should apportion her time, and for a fixed period everyday you should not even let her come into the kitchen.

You should give up the idea of getting ghee from anywhere except from Chharodi *. If you cannot get ghee from there, you should cultivate the habit of doing without it. It is, I believe, now proved that there is no harm in using linseed oil. If we have milk and curds, it does not matter too much if we do not get ghee.

Do set a limit to the quantity of vegetables. Make it a rule that not more than ten tolas of cleaned vegetables should be cooked per person.

Your mental co-operation is needed in these changes, that is, you should accept these changes with your heart and mind.

* A dairy centre in the Ahmedabad district.

You should prepare yourselves for kindergarten work. Now that a capable teacher has been appointed specially for this, you can now get all the training that you want.

Blessings from Bapu

61

11-2-'29

Dear Sisters,

I am always satisfied with whatever you can do sincerely. My happiness lies in your peace and contentment.

Deep in my heart there is no sorrow for the death of Rasik. There is a certain attachment which might cause grief which, too, arises only out of self-regard. We all have to go where Rasik has gone. The question is only one of time. Then why feel grief or fear death? After death, there is either rebirth or salvation. We do love life, otherwise if we desire and strive for it, we can obtain salvation too. There is no third state. If we do not ceaselessly strive for salvation, then another birth is inevitable. And if we like being born as we do, then there is no cause for feeling unhappy. Grief consists in our infatuation. Knowing thus, I have not stopped my work here even for a moment.

Blessings from Bapu

Rangoon,
4-3-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today I have time only to remember you.

If at all I am to receive your letter, it will be by the next post. Mail takes full seven days to reach here.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Mandalay,
18-3-'29

Dear Sisters,

Mandalay is the town where Lokamanya wrote his commentary on the Gita, and where Lalaji and Subhas Bose were kept prisoners. That is where we are today. I have not been able to go out to see these various places myself, but I have sent others to go and have a look at them. The lady of the household with whom we are staying is of saintly character. She has immense wealth; her husband is alive, and she has children. And yet she does not put on even a single ornament. She does not encourage her daughters either to wear jewelry. She has a daughter thirteen years of age. But she has been telling her not to think of marriage till she is twenty years old. She made her daughter give me whatever ornaments she possessed. She also follows the other rules of our Ashram. She reads *Navajivan* * regularly. Nor can she be said to be highly educated.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* The weekly then published by Gandhiji.

Calcutta,
25-3-'29

Dear Sisters,

I write this letter simply by way of remembering you since I hope to reach there practically at the same time as this letter.

I do not find anywhere such real education from actual experience as you are getting there in the Udyog Mandir. But we have still a great deal more to do. We should reach a stage when we can admit any woman to it quite fearlessly.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

8-4-'29

Dear Sisters,

I cannot drive out of my mind the memory of the incidents that took place in the Udyog Mandir. I see lack of courage in each of them. There can never be Truth where there is no courage. To do a wrong thing is sin ; but to hide the wrong is a greater sin. He who admits his misdeed with a pure heart has his sin washed off, and he can travel once again by the right path. But he who hides his misdeed out of a false sense of shame falls into a deeper pit. We have seen this to be true every time, and hence I request all of you to avoid a false sense of shame. If you have done wrong, whether knowingly or unknowingly, make it known at once and make a resolution not to do it again.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

15-4-'29

Dear Sisters,

I have no time to write much today. I request you to maintain and further the cause of our Mandir.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

22-4-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today we are in a village which is without all facilities. So I shall have to prepare my mail early ; it will then go to a post office eight miles from here. There is a lot of discomfort here, but with it plenty of new experiences. I also continue to get money for the Fund.

You know that women here * are very good at spinning. Khadi is much more in use among women here than in Gujarat. There is no purdah, or false modesty. As a result they are strong in body and can also work very hard.

They have filled my collection bag with plenty of ornaments. Many give their rings, some their bangles, and a few their necklaces. I must have collected about a lakh of rupees till now.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* Gandhiji was touring the Andhra Pradesh.

29-4-'29

Chi. Gangabehn Zaveri,

Please regard this letter as meant also for the other Ashram sisters.

Vasumati and you have shouldered the burden of the women's section. I find this is due more to your regard for me than to your own will or strength to work. Even so it is good. May God give you the necessary will and strength. But do not attempt anything beyond your capacity.

The whole Ashram is facing an ordeal. That includes the women. I have written to Chhaganlal to say that those who want to set up separate households can do so. We shall have to think out what we should do in the case of women who have no menfolk living with them. All of you must think over the matter. No rule should apply to those who leave the Ashram or the Mandir. About them I risk the suggestion that they should merely stay as tenants. I do not see any other solution. It is not right to relax any of the rules. A tenant can stay on as long as it suits him or her and the landlord. I do not know whether any of our sisters want to be placed in such a position ; nor have I been able to decide whether we should run the risk of keeping them in this status even if they were willing. But all of you are there on the spot, so for the present you can at least think about this.

Blessings from Bapu

Rejol,
6-5-'29

Dear Sisters,

I am writing this from a village which is far from the railway. No matter where you wish to go from the village, you have to cross a river. There is no bridge, so the village is like an island. When the river is in flood, it brings silt with it and deposits it on the surrounding land. The soil here is therefore very fertile and people are fairly well off. They have been able to persuade me to come here on the temptation of getting funds. And I am getting the money too.

A lady named Durgabai has been touring with us from Kakinada. Her husband earns Rs 4000 a year ; out of this the lady spends about Rs 2000 on a women's school. She herself teaches Hindi and spinning in the school. About 80 girls know Hindi. The lady is kind and hard-working. I feel that she has faith in her work but not as much knowledge. She cannot be said to know Hindi very well. Her spinning also is rather mediocre. She says that she has no one to guide or help her in Kakinada. Consequently I feel that as a consequence her talents are not being fully used.

Blessings from Bapu

Nellore,
13-5-'29

Dear Sisters,

There are only a few days now before we meet again. It is getting hotter here day by day, as it must be there, but I do not feel the effects of it much. I see much good in that you are carrying on with resolution the prayer-classes, the kindergarten and the kitchen. They are imperfect, and may ever remain so. It is enough if we remain vigilant and continue to improve them. Even if we try to keep them going well, improvements are bound to take place. All of you should learn, with proper understanding of their meaning, the verses of the special prayer for women.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Curnool,
20-5-'29

Dear Sisters,

People of this city have allowed me an unusually quiet time. No crowds stood outside for having my *darshan*. So far I have not been able to escape crowds even on Mondays. A hot wind blows outside but owing to the wet *khas khas* curtains that are hung up, it is cool inside. If I complain of discomfort in travel after experiencing so much love and attention, I would indeed be most ungrateful.

Who can persuade the ladies here who wear six or seven earrings, three rings in the nose, and a different kind of ring round each of the fingers and on every toe, that there is no adornment in it at all?

Even some of the educated women are found wearing such ornaments. Whenever I see women done up like this, I think of you all, and feel delighted that you have been released from so many troubles.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Nainital,
17-6-'29

Dear Sisters,

Your responsibilities are increasing fairly fast. I send herewith a letter from Kishorlal regarding an 'Ideal Kindergarten'. Read it and pass it on to the teachers there. I wish that those of you who have interest in the work should be well trained for it. Learn it even if it means causing a lot of bother to Narayandas. It is possible to have a more capable teacher than he. But it is always better to depend upon one thing.

You will no doubt continue to excel yourselves in running our kitchen.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

9-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today I have work to do in connection with the Gujarati *Navajivan*, Hindi *Navajivan* and *Young India* and time is short. Please, therefore, excuse me if I am brief. Though I am here, think of me as though I were in your midst. All of you should live together as one. Help one another and bring credit to yourselves and the Mandir.

Blessings from Bapu

Bhopal,
16-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

Do not expect long letters from me for the present. I have very little time left on Mondays, because I have to finish the work on both the *Navajivans* on that day. I shall see how things work out as my tour progresses. We are here only for a few days. Yet Mirabehn has started a spinning and carding class. Jamnabehn has brought clothes made by the women-folk of Bombay, and sells them here. Prabhavati helps her. Kusum remains fully occupied with her work. I may be said to be in fairly good health. But I get very annoyed if any of our people makes a mistake. From that I can see that my body is not what I would like it to be, and that my mind has not become sufficiently detached from the body that it has control over it whatever one's physical condition might be.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Kanpur,

23-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

It is good that Valjibhai has been taking my classes also while I am away. All of you should take the fullest benefit of his learning. I cannot give you what he has. So when he is able to spare more time for you as at present take all that you can from the wealth of his knowledge.

Lakshmibehn must have arrived there by now. One can understand why Ramabehn and Dahibehn are not able to attend the prayers. Devotion to duty is itself prayer. We go and pray in order to be qualified for doing actual service. But when one is engaged in actual practice of duty, prayer is merged with the execution of duty. If someone who is engaged in deep prayer, hears the cry of another who is stung by a scorpion, she is bound to leave the prayer and run to help him. Prayer finds fulfilment in the service of the distressed.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Lucknow,
30-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

Lucknow may be regarded as the centre of the purdah system. There are many Muslim women here. They have sent word to me asking how their miseries could come to an end. I could naturally give only one answer, that we forge our own fetters? Only yesterday we had a meeting of these women. Nobody had compelled them to put on purdah, and yet they all have always assumed that they could not do without it. The Ashram is meant to be an agency for removing such impediments, and you hold in your hands its key. If by breaking such shackles, and observing the limits of modesty you obtain knowledge and become devoted to service, you will easily serve as examples to other women.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Gorakhpur,
7-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

I am reminded of you on so many occasions. As I see women and their condition during my travels, I think of the many tasks before you, and feel sure that real education is of the heart. If there is pure love in the heart, everything else finds its way to it. The scope for the service of others is unlimited. Our capacity for service also can become boundless, as there is no limit to the capacity of the spirit. If the doors of the heart are open, everything can get into it. Even a little work by such people will shine forth. But service by any one whose heart is sealed to others will amount to nothing. This is the meaning we attach to the story of the offerings Vidura and Duryodhana made to God Krishna. You will remember how in the Mahabharata Vidura could only offer some simply-cooked greens while Duryodhana offered many rich dishes.

Blessings from Bapu

Hardwar,
14-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today we have arrived near the source of the Ganga. It is from very near here that the Ganga enters the plains. Further up we gradually get to the hills.

Today being my day of silence, Kusum, Prabhavati and Kanti have gone out with Devadas for sight-seeing. Nature is bountiful here, but man has spoiled every place.

Today this much should suffice.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Mussooree,
21-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

Mussooree is one of those places where there is no end to pleasure-seeking. There is no purdah here. Wealthy ladies spend their time in dancing, painting their lips and decking themselves in all sorts of ways. They also go in for a lot of blind imitation of the ways of the West. Ours is the middle course. We wish neither to maintain blind superstition and the purdah, nor to foster immodesty and self-indulgence. This middle course is straight, but difficult. Our aim is to go by it and to remain permanently on it.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Meerut,
28-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today we are in Kripalaniji's Ashram at Meerut. So one can feel our Ashram atmosphere here.

I write to you today about our common kitchen. Diwali will be soon upon us. I have already received several letters. I write this to remove your misgivings. You have now had one complete year's experience and you have shouldered the entire burden. I have only tasted some of the results of your work in the kitchen ; so my opinion can have no real value. It is your opinions that should really count. Therefore, I will readily accept whatever decision all of you take. My advice is only this. Do not go into too much discussion ; do not take much time over it ; after the essential discussion come to a quick decision. And whatever you decide stick to your decision. Only thus can we progress. Arguments for and against there will always be. Sometimes we may even come to a wrong decision. But do not worry on that score.

It is very necessary to form the habit of coming to a decision, and then sticking to it resolutely. Of course it is a different matter if we later find that that decision was morally wrong. One may never continue with a decision involving sin.

Blessings from Bapu

Aligarh,
4-11-'29

Dear Sisters,

Do not expect long letters from me for the present. May the New Year bring happiness to you all.

That Kalavati's jewels disappeared is a matter of shame for us. But I do not really feel sorry for Kalavati. He or she who keeps jewelry or other precious things in the Ashram is untrue to the code of the Ashram, and should not feel grieved if they are lost or stolen. Let us take a lesson from this incident and search our small boxes and big boxes. Everybody must have sufficient confidence that he or she can get anything kept in deposit with the Ashram whenever it is wanted.

It is good that you have made a definite rule about the kitchen. Hereafter there should be no further discussion about it, and any family that obtains permission to cook separately may do so. None should envy them this concession.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Shahjahanpur,
11-11-'29

Dear Sisters,

It is being clearly proved that thefts in our Ashram are due merely to our own carelessness. Carelessness is of two kinds. First, we are not vigilant enough, and secondly in spite of warning some go on keeping either money or ornaments with them. There will always be some thieves in this world. There are three ways of guarding against them : (1) We should not keep anything with us. This ideal is hardly feasible. (2) If we keep anything with us, to that extent we should be vigilant. (3) We should frighten away the thief by fear of punishment by law, and we too should join in punishing him. We have turned away from this last course of remedy. The first method is to be our ideal. The second one we have already been putting into practice — accumulating as little as possible, and being extremely vigilant about what it is absolutely necessary to keep with us. It is here as I pointed out that we are generally negligent.

Since this letter has turned out to be of common interest to all let it be read at the evening prayers.

Do not get disheartened by the burden of kitchen-work. Ask for whatever help you require, but never give up. We might not undertake a piece of work at all, but once having undertaken it, we must stick to it to the last. God always helps those who work steadfastly in this spirit. That is the lesson to be learnt

from the anecdotes of Gajendramoksha* and the devotional song about the male and female tortoises.†

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* This refers to the following story from the *Bhagawat*:

An elephant once went to a lake for drinking water. A huge alligator caught hold of his leg and began to drag him inside the water. The elephant could not resist the alligator's great strength although he tried hard. When the elephant was on the point of being drowned, he prayed to Lord Vishnu for help, who came to his rescue and saved him.

† This refers to a similar story:

A male and female turtle were caught by a hunter who put them into boiling water to be cooked. Being great devotees of Lord Vishnu they prayed to him for succour. God Vishnu sent rain, the water thus became cool and the turtles were saved.

Prayagji,*

18-11-'29

Dear Sisters,

I shall write about an idea which occurred to me from Santok's operation. In India ladies hesitate to have their bodies to be examined by a male doctor. This is not good; it is a bad attitude. Much harm has been done to us due to it. At the root of this sense of shame lies sex-obsession, not purity. I wish we can get rid of this superstition. If Dr. Haribhai had not been allowed to operate upon Santok's body, it would never have been done and her life would have been in danger. No woman should hesitate to allow her body to be examined by a male doctor. There can be no reason for fear since after all some relative or acquaintance is bound to accompany the patient. Perhaps you do not know that I had called in a male doctor at the time of Ba's last confinement. Earlier, when she had an operation, that too was done by a male doctor. Ba did not lose anything by this. In such matters, all that we have to do is to change the way we look at them. Therefore it is, that I have put this before you. If you want to ask me anything about this you can do so on Tuesday next (26th).

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* Allahabad.

Wardha,
9-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

When I was with you this time there was such hustle that I could not speak to you about two things. For one subject, it came to my notice so late that there was no time to do anything about it ; the other I quite forgot to mention.

I will take up the second topic first. Our women do not let male doctors to examine their bodies or to operate upon them. This is a false sense of modesty which has its root in sex-obsession. In this matter I prefer the practice of the West. I do know that at times undesirable consequences have resulted from it. When unscrupulous doctors and women who are easily duped or roused to passion come together, it has led to immoral acts. But that kind of thing happens in this world practically under any other set of circumstances, and there is no reason why on that account necessary and good activities should be put to a stop. We must have confidence in ourselves. Therefore, I very much appreciated that Santok got herself operated upon by Dr. Haribhai, and my opinion about her courage was strengthened. In Phoenix we had made this the common practice. A male doctor was engaged when Devdas was born. Ba had a complaint of the womb and had to have an operation. It was done by a male doctor. Ba is very brave and simple in such matters. Of course she does need my presence at such times. But this is a matter of detail. Every one must have some trusted person by her side on

such occasions, and this is but right. My purpose in writing all this is that in our Ashram we should develop this type of courage and lay aside a false sense of shame. Hundreds and thousands of women suffer terribly due to such false shame. We have our own Vidyavati's example. She was not willing to get herself examined even by a lady doctor. We need to develop the innocence of Shukadevji.* So long as we have not developed it, we should not pretend to possess it. There are men who can be excited by merely touching a woman. There are women who become so likewise by a mere touch from a man. It is necessary that such persons should avoid all human contact even if it means a certain coercion or even illness. At present I merely suggest that false shame should be abandoned. Those who are afraid of getting excited by a mere touch should admit the fact candidly and they must remain within their limits. Such a passionate nature is a kind of disease, and persons of this type should avoid the touch of another man or woman. The disease is likely to disappear in course of time.

Try to understand the import of this part of the letter even by reading it several times. If you do not understand, ask me ; or you may ask Valjibhai ; he will be able to explain it. After all, it is simple enough.

The second point of my letter arises from Umiya's wedding. As soon as Umiya was married, she began

* According to the Mahabharata, he was a son of Vyasa, and known for his having developed such continence as to not to feel or to provoke any self-consciousness in the presence of the other sex.

to wear ornaments in her nose and ears. I did not like this at all ; the giver and the receiver were both at fault. What happened was against the custom in the Ashram. Umiya could have put on the ornaments after going to her husband's place. But the poor girl could not wait. I do not write about this incident in order to pour out my own unhappiness, but to make an example of it for all of you. Let no other girl imitate Umiya. In any case poor Umiya received very little training within the Ashram. Jaysukhlal (her father) too has not bestowed sufficient attention to her. Her mother is generally good-natured and observes tradition, not knowing whether it is good or bad. She should, therefore, be forgiven.

I have already spoken to both Umiya and her husband and warned them about this. The husband has not given her anything but a small bracelet. I have mentioned this matter, so that no girl or woman knowing the ways of the Ashram may do such a thing in the future. I also wish to draw another moral from this incident. It is the lust of men which has often degraded women and taught them ways of dressing and behaving, whereby women might tempt and excite them. Woman did not see this in the sense of her own enslavement and degradation. She also harboured lust, and so she bored her nose, bored her ears and put on shackles (in the form of ornaments) on her feet and became a slave. An unscrupulous man can easily tempt a woman now with a nose-ring or earring. I have never been able to understand why women put on these things which lead to their disablement. Real beauty lies in the heart. May every woman in the Ashram be freed from love of external beauty and all these nose-rings. Is it not enough that

we bore the noses of animals? It is six o'clock now and I must stop. I remembered you so early in the morning, because there is so much I want you to do.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

85

Wardha,

16-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

I wrote to you to my heart's content last time and so I shall be very brief today. I have still to write many letters and the time is already up. I go on writing on so many matters, but you may take in whatever you can digest and leave the rest. What you do understand, and accept, you must try hard and put into practice.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

Delhi,
23-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

I am writing this from Delhi soon after morning prayers. The cold is so severe that Mirabehn's toes have become stiff. She has got back into bed, and is lying near me. Of course Lahore is even colder than Delhi.

But I do not wish to write to you about weather. I have to write to you about our duties. For the present it is enough for me to say that those who think of their own selves and interests will surely suffer a fall. Those who are devoted to their duties will have no time even to fall. I have always found that it is only those who are or who become averse to Truth that fall. A sinful act needs secrecy. It is generally done in secret. We do find persons who have abandoned all sense of shame and act sinfully in the open. There are others who regard vice as virtue. We are not thinking of such persons at present. Most of our activities have fallen back because of the regard for oneself referred to above. In this selfishness lies the danger of our fall and the fall of society also. Think deeply over this, and let each of you examine your own life from this standpoint.

Blessings from Bapu

Lahore,
30-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

I write this merely to show how I am thinking of you today, my day of silence. I hope to reach there on the 5th. It is fairly cold here. I am sitting in a meeting and there are noises all round me. So I shall not attempt to write anything more.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

APPENDIX I

MANIBEHN'S NOTES

[Taken by Miss Manibehn Patel at Gandhiji's morning prayer-meetings for women in the Ashram during 1926]

The first three verses which were always recited at the morning prayers for women contain the moving appeal of Draupadi to Shri Krishna when Duryodhan attempted to pull off her clothes in the court of the Kauravas.

The verses are : *

गोविन्द, द्वारिकावासिन् , कृष्ण, गोपीजनप्रिय ।

कौरवैः परिभूतां मां किं न जानासि केशव ॥

हे नाथ, हे रमानाथ, व्रजनाथार्तिनाशन ।

कौरवार्णवमग्नां मां अद्भुतस्व जनार्दन ॥

कृष्ण, कृष्ण, महायोगिन् , विश्वात्मन् , विश्वभावन ।

प्रपन्नां पाहि गोविन्द, कुरुमध्येऽवसीदतीम् ॥

Expounding the verses Bapu said, " My ideal is this. A man should remain man and yet should learn to become woman ; similarly a woman should remain woman and yet learn to become man. This is to say that men should cultivate the gentleness and the courtesy of women and women should cast off their timidity and become brave.

It is often said that women are very jealous and envious by nature, but this does not mean that men are free from this weakness. Nor is it true that all women are jealous. Women have to stay indoors for

* For translation of these verses please see p. 115.

all the twenty-four hours and therefore their jealousy seems more conspicuous. That is all.

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My patience in teaching you will be endless. It will end only when your desire to learn ends.

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Both man and woman can become fearless. Man thinks that he can be fearless, but it is not always true. Similarly woman thinks herself to be the weaker sex and allows herself to be called so; this too is not right. Women have no need at all to be full of fear. I will tell you what I heard about Mirabai the day before yesterday. Mirabai went to Vrindavan and knocked at the door of a *sadhu*. The *sadhu* replied from inside that he never looked on the face of a woman. Mirabai asked him, 'Who are you? I know only one man, and that is God.' On hearing this, the *sadhu* opened the door, fell at the feet of Mirabai and said, 'My eyes have been opened today. I have been saved from the depths of ignorance.'

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Man and woman are a prey to fear as long as both are subject to passions.

Draupadi showed as much strength as Yudhishthir did.

Draupadi had five husbands at one time and yet has been called 'chaste' (*sati*). This is because in that age, just as a man could marry several wives, a woman (in certain regions) could marry several husbands. The mores about marriage change with time and place.

From another point of view, Draupadi can be regarded to symbolise the human mind or intelligence (*buddhi*). And the five Pandavas are the five senses brought under its control. And it is indeed desirable that they are so controlled. Since all the five senses were under the control of the mind and had become refined, the mind can be said to have wedded to the five senses.

The strength which Draupadi showed was immeasurable. Even Bhima and a noble king like Yudhishthir were afraid of her.

I read Draupadi's prayer in the *Mahabharata* when I was in prison and I cried for a long time. To my mind, this prayer of Draupadi has extraordinary strength in it. Countless people recite these verses in North India.

The power of words increases or decreases in proportion to the intensity of spiritual effort underlying them. What is there in the word 'ॐ'? It is simply made up of three letters अ, उ and म्. And yet its value lies in the spiritual force associated with it. When there is greater penance behind the word, its value becomes greater. The same is the case with Draupadi. She may even be regarded as just another imaginary character created by Vyasji. Such a woman may have actually existed or she may not have. But the great strength of Vyasji's own spiritual stature and the recitation by crores of human beings of the prayers composed by him for Draupadi, have raised the value of that prayer.

Govinda means the master of the senses; by Gopis are meant the thousands of sense impulses. 'Gopijanapriya' means one who is the beloved of the many or say, of the weak. Draupadi was hemmed in

by the Kauravas. The Kauravas are all our base desires. Draupadi cries out 'Keshava, how is it that you do not know me?' It is the cry of all who are distressed. Do we not all have evil desires? When are we completely free from passions? When Draupadi says that she has been surrounded by Kauravas, 'Kauravas' may also mean wicked persons. But we are oppressed even more by our evil desires than by wicked persons. So it is better to interpret 'Kauravas' to mean evil desires.

Draupadi is a true servant of God and as such she has the right to chide even Him. She cries, 'Oh Master, Oh Lord, Oh Ramanath, i.e. Lakshmiapati, i.e. Lord of the World, He who gives salvation, He who brings about self-realisation, I am drowning in a sea of Kauravas, i.e. I am sinking in a multitude of wild desires; I am full of wicked passions. Save me.'

Draupadi calls out 'Krishna, Krishna'. When a person is either in great joy or in great trouble, he or she thus calls out the name twice. She says, 'I come to you for refuge; save me; I am beset with evil passions, and have become helpless. Raise me out of all this.'

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In Bombay there is a lady called Janakibai. In 1915 when I was staying with Revashankarbhai she came to see me. She told me a lot of things about her bravery and so on. At that time I did not have any faith in what she said. When I went to Dwarka later, she also arrived there. So I made particular inquiries about her and found that she moved quite freely among the most wicked of men. She has convinced herself that she should be able to preserve her honour

even while living in the midst of the worst men. And now all of them treat her with respect. She moves amongst them like a lioness.

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We are helpless like Draupadi, because we are all full of impurities and evil desires of various kinds. Our fear of snakes and such like is a proof of our weakness. I am regarded as the highest in the Ashram, but I, too, have these fears. It means that I also am more helpless than Draupadi.

Dwarka in the Gita means the whole world, or our own selves, not the dirty little town near Porbandar in Kathiawad.

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What may women have done that even men like Tulsidas have used derogatory terms in regard to them? Whether it was the fault of Tulsidas or of the times, it is a definite shortcoming.

The ancient laws were made by men. Though these men were sages and seers they show a lack of real knowledge of women. Strictly speaking, as between man and woman, neither should be regarded as superior or inferior. The place and functions of both are different, and God has determined limitations of both.

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Only a soul can raise another soul; the self is the help of the self. Only women can raise women. This requires sacrifice and hard work. It is true that women are more capable of sacrifice than men; but the sacrifice must be intelligent. Today women merely toil on unwillingly like labourers.

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It may be said that no one can protect or save woman except herself. But it may be asked, 'Can she be self-reliant?' My heart says that she can. If she learns Satyagraha, she can be perfectly independent and self-supporting. She will not have to feel dependent upon any one. This does not mean that she will not take any help from others. She certainly will. But if such help be not forthcoming she will not feel helpless. If we have sufficient detachment, even while we use articles which we receive, we are self-dependent. In such a state, even though accepting help from all the world, we in fact never become dependent on others. And if this help is denied to us, we would only say, "It is good that it was not given." We will not get annoyed or blame any one. This is Satyagraha. It is not enough to reason with oneself that we should not be afraid. We should become fearless at heart. Nor does casting off fear mean being indifferent to the world.

You should give up the idea, "I have no one in the world". God is the help of all. It is possible to throw the blame for the present sorry condition of women on their husbands. But women should only think how best they can cast off their own weakness themselves.

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There can be only one prayer for us all. If we offer this prayer daily, understanding it properly, it will for ever be present in our thoughts. Keshava (God) is always with us. He is not in some place called Dwarka. That is only the language of the poet. Draupadi forgot that Keshava was always present everywhere. He clothed her body again and again while Duryodhana was pulling her clothes off.

Whenever evil thoughts or evil desires spring in our mind, we should ask ourselves why such thoughts should come to us and think of these verses.

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[After explaining the meaning of these verses about Draupadi, Bapu had *Hind Swaraj** read to them for a few days. Below are some of the comments he made while the book was being read.]

This is not a mere political book. I have really tried to say something about matters of ethics under the guise of political affairs. What is the meaning of 'Hind Swaraj'? It means Rule of Religion or Rama-rajya (Kingdom of God). I have addressed as many meetings of women as of men. At women's meetings I have always used the word 'Rama-rajya' rather than 'Swarajya'.

This book is the essence of my thinking over several years. Just as there are times when a man cannot but speak out what he feels so I have written this book because I had to say what I have said there. The book is written mainly for illiterate people.

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Whatever character we have inherited from our parents is our real inheritance. It may be said to be our spiritual inheritance, and it is our duty to add to it. If a father leaves a legacy of a lakh rupees, and the son increases it to a million and then says, "What kind of man was my father that he collected only a lakh and how much more clever am I that I have got together a million?"; he is a bad son; there is pride in what he says. We do not wish to add to money inherited from our parents, but to character, to our spiritual inheritance. However, we should not feel

* Written by Gandhiji in 1908.

arrogant about it for spiritual inheritance is never got without humility.

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In abstaining from a thing we are never used to from birth—for example, meat-eating—we can hardly be said to make any sacrifice. Such a thing is quite natural for us, and we undergo no effort of will therein.

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Man's beauty is in his character, that of a beast in its bodily form. While looking at a cow, for instance, we may speak of its skin, or hair, or feet, or horns; in the case of a man, on the other hand, we do not say that he is civilized because he is five feet and a half, and not if he is only four feet and a half, and better with every inch more than five and a half feet. The basis of goodness or badness in the case of man lies in his heart, not in the body or even in accumulated wealth. Here in the Ashram, we have regarded it our moral duty to build up the qualities of the heart. That we eat and drink, and live in brick houses is entirely because we have had to do these things. We have not to be ashamed to live in mud-huts. Indeed, we should feel embarrassed to live in luxury. We should really feel like hanging our heads in shame whenever we have to add to the comforts of living. Of course, we may possess wealth for service; we have to accumulate such wealth, much against our will. But some people accumulate wealth, adopting greed as their religion. This is not proper. In proportion as we make our outer life more and more elaborate, our inner growth is slackened and to that extent the cause of religion suffers.

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Our merchants earn crores of rupees in the Bombay markets. That is no cause for satisfaction to us. It is rather a matter for sorrow. Because when a Bombay merchant earns five crores by way of brokerage, the British get ninety-five crores and that too he takes by exploiting the country and its poorest people. We do not realise this, because after all it takes time to show before a whole nation of thirty-three crore persons is bled to death.

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[Once Bapu thus spoke about manual work :]

If a labourer does all his work dedicating it to God, then he can attain self-realisation. Self-realisation means purity of self. Strictly speaking, only those who do bodily labour achieve self-realisation; because 'God is the strength of the weak'. By 'weak' is not meant 'weak in body', though for them too their strength is God — but we should take it to mean weak in means and equipment. The labourer must cultivate humility. An exclusive development of the intellect may lead to the development of a diabolic kind of intelligence. By doing merely intellectual work, we develop satanic tendencies. It is, for this that the Gita says that he who eats without doing labour eats stolen food. Humility is inherent in each act of labour. And that is why it is *Karmayoga*, or activity that leads to salvation. Doing physical work simply for getting money is no *Karmayoga*, since the idea is simply to earn money. Cleaning of latrines for earning money is no *yajna* (sacrifice). But the same act, if done by way of service, for the sake of sanitation and for the good of others, becomes *yajna*. One who does physical labour out of a spirit of service,

in all humility and for self-realisation, gets self-realisation. Such a person would never feel reluctant to work. He should ever be tireless.

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How can the pot call the kettle black when both are of practically the same colour? In the same way what can man say to woman or how can he afford to be sarcastic about her? If numerous suspicions, superstitions, passions and fears characterise women, they exist also in men. Some *pandits* say that woman cannot attain salvation. But as I see it, that is not so. The Vaishnavas believe that there has not been a greater devotee of God than Mirabai. I feel that if Mirabai cannot get salvation, no man would ever get it.

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The farmer sleeps in the open field. Are you or the British officer ever likely to sleep there? Who cares to find out how he feels or thinks? What joy does he get out of life? Early in the morning he has to start his work in the field so he often sleeps there. Sometime a snake bites him and he dies. But the farmer leads such a life by compulsion. If it is at all called sacrifice on his part, it is sacrifice forced on him. It is not as though he voluntarily refuses to travel by train; if someone provides him with an opportunity to do so, he would immediately travel. But if he leads his particular kind of life with some consciousness of values, his life would indeed be blessed. Some sages lead a life like this farmer, or in an even more primitive way. But in their case they have taken to such life voluntarily.

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I would certainly worship an idol even made of clay, if thereby my heart feels lighter. If my life seems satisfying and meaningful, fruitful, then the worship of young Krishna's idol has meaning. The stone is no God ; but God resides in the stone. If ever I besmear an idol with sandal-wood paste, make an offering of rice, and pray to it for strength to kill others, I hope one of you will have the strength to pick the idol up and throw it into a well or even break it into pieces.

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If we wish to develop in us the capacity to look on all as equals, we should also aim at getting only what the rest of the world gets. Thus, if the whole world gets milk, we may also have it. We may pray to God and say, "O God, if you wish me to have milk, give it first to the rest of the world." But who can pray thus ? Only he who has so much sympathy for others and who labours for their good. Even if we cannot practise this principle, we must at least understand and appreciate it. For the present, our only prayer to God should be that since we are fallen so low he should accept whatever little we are capable of doing. Even if we do not progress very far in this direction, he should give us strength to lessen our possessions. If we repent of our sins, they will at least not increase further. We should not keep anything with us thinking it as our own, but should strive to give up as many of our possessions as we can.

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If man required the help of the whole world before he can follow Truth and Non-violence, then he would indeed become dependent. But God has arranged things so beautifully, that even if the whole

world is against him, he can still follow Truth and Non-violence himself. If we do not wish to quarrel, another person can certainly not quarrel with us. In the end he will get tired and hold his peace. On the other hand, by giving an angry reply or by getting angry, we increase anger. It is like adding fuel to the fire.

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How can someone hope to rise, in whose mind there is never any problem?

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What we have to learn from X's suicide is that we should not allow worry or unhappiness to prey constantly upon our minds. We should not brood over them. If we feel hurt by something someone has done we should tell him so straight away. Only then will the pain not remain in our hearts. Even brooding sorrowfully within oneself is a kind of suicide.

How far is self-criticism desirable? In a way it is good to remain dissatisfied with one's self. But such dissatisfaction should not go beyond a certain limit. If a man's dissatisfaction is within limits he will rise. But if he always goes on finding fault with himself needlessly, always worrying about not being able to do this or that, then not only will he be unable to do any of these things but he will generally make a fool of himself. We should retain a kind of cheerfulness and confidence together with a certain discontent also. Then only can we rise.

This body is sometimes called a precious gift. If we remain devoted to God, it will really prove to be a precious possession. But to become wholly devoted to God, we have to control the body.

Much of man's working day is spent away from the home. As a result of these outside preoccupations, he does not get so easily depressed. But woman has to stay all the time inside the house. So she feels lonely and falls an easy prey to despondency. If ever she finds another woman to talk to, she becomes so talkative that she fails to discriminate between what she should say and what she should not. As she is always shut in inside her home she develops such habits. Of course in a sense such seclusion is desirable. It saves a woman from many temptations. But solitude is fruitful only if we learn to turn our eyes inward, search our hearts, and become introspective.

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Let us think of a woman who cannot read or write, yet remains absorbed in her work. She does not touch even a blade of grass that does not belong to her. She would not think of stealing even in her dreams. If you ask her what the *Bhagavata* is, she may blankly stare at you, but she loves every human being, as though she were the mother of all mankind. Suppose there is another woman, who has learnt everything, has all the Upanishads by heart, her pronunciation is excellent, but she steals, tells lies, and is very clever in making others work for her ; she is adept in almost everything. There is not the slightest doubt that the former is superior to the latter. Of course if she learns reading and writing, she would be better still.

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Of what use is knowledge in which there is no humility or gentleness? Sage Kaushika became very angry when a bird dropped dirt on his body. The bird was consumed to ashes by his anger. The sage

felt somewhat proud of the power of his penance. He then went to someone's house as a guest. The lady of the house was busy attending to her husband, and so she kept him waiting. After she had finished her work she went to the sage with some food for him and stating the cause of her delay apologised to him. So the sage became angry once again. The lady said, "I am not that bird as to be consumed by your anger; besides, such anger can hardly be reconciled with your knowledge." The sage learnt a lesson and said, "You have given me two kinds of food today — food for the body and the food of knowledge."

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Generally speaking, a man who does the work that comes his way by the force of circumstances can remain unattached to it. He has no false attachment for such work.

Real knowledge and true education consists in devoted performance of one's duty.

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We would even be nauseated to see the various kinds of people that throng the hospitals. Doctors treat them, but it should be also their duty to teach them how to remain healthy. Hardly any doctor does this work. Many doctors tend to pamper the body. By doing so they do harm to man's character and to his soul. Besides, by pampering the body they cannot really protect it from disease.

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To kill living animals and prepare serum from them, to learn to join up tissues by putting a stitch

here and a stitch there, is this the work of a human being? It is the work for a Frankenstein.

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● Passionate desire is common both to man and woman. The mind of such a person always wanders about seeking an object of pleasure. But we must understand that we have obtained this birth not for enjoying or giving such pleasures, but for self-realisation.

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The marriage of Shiva and Parvati is regarded as an ideal marriage. Anyone who wants to have a genuine marriage like Parvati's should think of a man who is free from passions like Shiva. It is not Parvati alone that was fated to get such a husband. Every woman holds this fate in her own hands.

In choosing a husband, we must not go by the kind of clothes he puts on, or style of the turban he wears. We must see how well educated he is, and what the qualities of his character are. Once you have decided to marry, marry a person of good character, whose mind is compatible with yours. If you can find such a person, well and good; otherwise one should decide to remain unmarried. One should not think of marrying anyone who comes along. Parvatiji had resolved that she would marry only one who was free from all passions, otherwise she would remain unmarried. Every girl should cherish the ideal of Parvati.

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Not to ride on another's back is also service. Not to accept service from another, or to develop an

attitude which refuses to make others work for one-self is also service.

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Such is the world that while we are taking three stitches here, the thread snaps in thirteen other places. Then how and where are we to set things aright? Real progress consists in recognising the reality which exists within us as our soul.

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If we are kind, the whole world is kind to us. Patanjali has written that the desire for revenge disappears in the presence of non-violence. If we are ourselves slaves we regard everyone else as slaves. In short, who wants to cheat an innocent man? One who tries to play false with such a person, will ultimately hurt only himself. If we do not retaliate, if we do not oppose the misdeeds of a wicked person, his misdeeds themselves will bring about his downfall. He will stumble and then improve his ways.

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If we achieve Swaraj in our own Ashram, we would obtain Swaraj for the whole of India. It means we would all be true and straightforward. None of us would look upon another with suspicion. If we have no mutual distrust Swaraj is at our very door.

Swaraj means rule over one's own self, not over another. It means controlling one's self. He who has acquired control over his senses has gained everything for himself.

He who believes in punishment and violence has necessarily to resort to deceit. Deceit is a necessary accompaniment of such belief.

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Our temple is in our Ashram ; why, it is in our hearts. A temple constructed out of a few stones has no meaning. Only a temple raised in our hearts has any use.

• If our Ashram goes on well like this, and does not produce any bad people within it, it would become a place of pilgrimage.

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Every pebble on the bank of the Narmada is said to be Shiva. By the Narmada we do not mean only the river near Broach, but all rivers. If we wash clean a pebble on the bank of a river and offer a *bilva-patra* * to it, the pebble becomes Shiva for us. Going a step further, if we take a lump of earth and mould it to the shape of a Shiva-idol, it also becomes Shiva for us. On the same lines, we may have the faith that Shiva resides in the hearts of us all. We are idol-worshippers as well as idol-breakers simultaneously. We are to break what is mere matter in an idol, but to worship the divine spirit within it.

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I expect all the women in the Ashram should not do even a single piece of work without giving proper thought to it. To this end, women should acquire knowledge. At present, women of India have become dull and lifeless.

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A girl who wishes to remain unmarried should be wedded to independence. A girl dependent upon others can never remain unmarried.

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* The leaf of a tree sacred to the Hindus.

Violence breeds violence. If we rob one, some one else is always ready to rob us. There is a proverb in Gujarati which says that even for every lion, there is always a bigger lion.

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When we do not know cooking, and yet prepare ill-cooked things and eat them we get indigestion. In the same way if we do not understand what we read and yet go on reading, we shall get indigestion by reading.

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Even the greatest are punished if they do things they ought not to do.

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Devotees of God carry on activities dictated by their inner voice. But the inner voice also can sometimes deceive us. So devotees must always remain vigilant.

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A person who speaks half-truths really lies one and a half times for he deceives his own mind too ; whereas a person who tells a deliberate lie knows in his mind that he is telling a lie.

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Education of children mainly depends on their mothers. However well I may try to educate children in the Ashram, my efforts will prove futile without the co-operation of mothers. We have to educate our children to be helpful to others. Even when a child goes to a teacher for studying, he carries with him a strand attached to his mother's heart. He is always thinking about when he can go back to his mother. The mother draws the child to herself by means of that heart-string.

We may read the Gita, or the Ramayana or the *Hind Swaraj*. But what we have to learn from them is desire for the good of others. We have to teach this to our children also.

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Those of our forefathers who gave up liquor did a manly and meritorious thing. But for us who have never tasted liquor, there can be only a negative kind of merit in not drinking. We do not incur the sin of drinking—that is all. We may be said to have really given up drinking only after we understand all the evils that result from drinking.

In the same way there is no meaning in our observing sacred days and vows without understanding their significance. Such observance becomes useful both to us and to society if we understand its meaning and can explain it to others. Our women observe Nagapanchami,* Janmashtami,† and other holy days. But they should understand why they are observing them. It is possible that the meaning of Nagapanchami is to regard the serpent as the symbol of one's enemy and it was sought through this means to inculcate the principle that one should not kill even one's enemy. In this world, there is no other creature so poisonous to man as a serpent except another man. If we find any one as full of venom as a serpent, we should learn to love him, as though he were full of nectar. From doing this, we shall learn that every human being is worthy of worship, i.e. of service.

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* A religious day dedicated to worship of snakes.

† A festival celebrating the birth of Krishna.

This world is held together by bonds of love. History does not record the day to day incidents of love and service. It only records incidents of conflict and war. Actually, however, acts of love and service are much more common in this world than conflicts and quarrels. We find innumerable villages and towns flourishing in the world. If the world were to consist of quarrel and discord, they could not possibly so exist.

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We must necessarily break those laws that violate the canons of religion. Not only should we not observe such laws, but we should even actively resist them. There are two ways of doing this—either through violence or through Satyagraha. We should follow only the path of Satyagraha. We do not want to commit violence in the name of morality. We may even go to the gallows, or be killed rather than hurt others in the name of religion.

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It is often asked how women may protect honour. It is even suggested that for this purpose women should carry daggers with them. If they do carry daggers with them, the daggers are bound to be used against their own persons. Besides, one has to be very hard of heart to be able to wield a dagger. One would have to change one's whole mode of life. A person who has never seen blood drawn or have drawn blood himself can never use a dagger. In order to be able to use a dagger, we have to take to hunting, and also to killing other animals like sheep or goats, so hard shall we have to make our hearts in order to thrust a dagger through someone.

So instead of training women to use a dagger, it is better to teach them to be fearless. God's protecting hands are always over us. If we really believe in the existence of God, whom shall we fear? Even if the most wicked of persons assaults you, take Ramanama(the name of God). Most wicked persons would run away at this earnest cry to God. But if that does not happen, what does it matter? We should learn to die on such an occasion. If a child is on its death-bed, do we not almost kill ourselves in looking after it? If even after the most devoted nursing the child dies in her lap, a mother has the satisfaction that she did her utmost for it. It is our duty to be ever prepared thus to lay down our lives. However wicked the man, if we die rather than yield to his physical strength, what after all can he do to us? It is possible that a wicked man may give up his wickedness when faced with a pure-minded person, who is fully prepared to die. Thus Satyagraha is twice profitable. It benefits him who offers it and also him towards whom it is offered.

APPENDIX II
VERSES RECITED AT THE
WOMEN'S MEETINGS

गोविन्द, द्वारिकावासिन्, कृष्ण, गोपीजनप्रिय ।

कोरवैः परिभूतां मां किं न जानासि केशव ? ॥

O Govinda, Krishna, living in Dwarka, and loved by all Gopis, how is it that you do not look after me when I am being oppressed by the Kauravas, i.e. wicked passions ?

हे नाथ ! हे रमानाथ ! व्रजनाथातिनाशन ।

कौरवार्णवमग्नां माम् अद्भुतस्व जनार्दन ! ॥

O Lord, husband of Rama, and master of Vraja, destroyer of all distress, O Janardana, raise me for I am being submerged in this ocean of the Kauravas.

कृष्ण कृष्ण सहायोगिन् विश्वात्मन् विश्वभावन ।

प्रपन्नां पाहि गोविन्द कुरुमध्येऽवसीदतीम् ॥

Krishna, Krishna, great *yogin*, Soul and Creator of the universe, O Govinda, save me, seeking your help and being degraded in the midst of the Kurus.

धर्मं चरत माधर्मं; सत्यं वदत नानृतम् ।

दीर्घं पश्यत मा ह्रस्वं; परं पश्यत माऽपरम् ॥

Follow *dharma* (religion) and not *adharma* (irreligion) ; speak the truth, do not tell a lie ; be far-sighted, not short-sighted. Pitch your thoughts high, not low.

अहिंसा सत्यम् अस्तेयम् शौचम् अग्निद्रियनिग्रहः ।

अेतं सामासिकं धर्मम् चातुर्वर्ण्येऽब्रवीन् मनुः ॥

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, observance of purity and control over senses — this in short is the duty of man, in each of the four castes as laid down by Manu.

अहिंसा सत्यम् अस्तेयम् अकाम-क्रोध-लोभता ।

भूत-प्रिय-हितेहा च धर्मोऽयं सार्ववर्णिकः ॥

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, absence of desire, anger and greed, and cherishing of desire to do good to all beings — this is the duty of the people of all castes.

विद्वद्भिः सेवितः सद्भिर् नित्यम् अद्वेष-रागिभिः ।

हृदयेनाभ्यनुज्ञातो यो धर्मस् तं निबोधत ॥

Know that to be *dharma* which is followed by the learned, by the good, and by those who are ever free from hatred or false attachment, and which is accepted by one's conscience (or heart).

श्रूयतां धर्मसर्वस्वम्, श्रुत्वा चैवावधार्यताम् ।

आत्मनः प्रतिकूलानि परेषां न समाचरेत् ॥

Listen to this essence of *dharma*, and having listened always bear it in your mind — one should not do unto others what one would not like to be done unto oneself.

ल्लोकार्धेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यद् अमुक्तं ग्रन्थकोटिभिः ।

परोपकारः पुण्याय, पापाय परपीडनम् ॥

I shall say in half a verse what has been said in crores of volumes — Doing good to others is merit ; hurting others is sin.

आदित्य-चन्द्रावनिलोज्ज्वलश्च ।

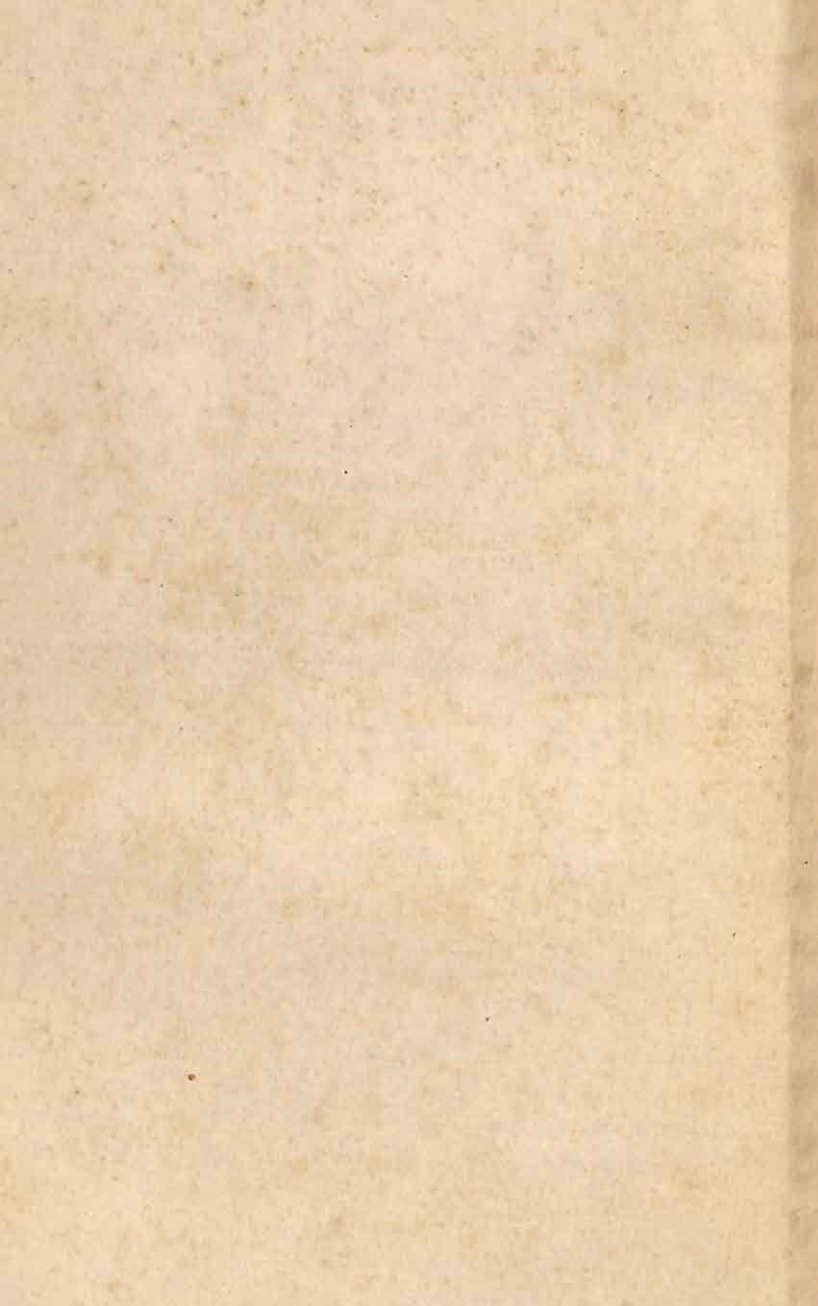
द्यौर् भूमिर् आपो हृदयं यमश्च ॥

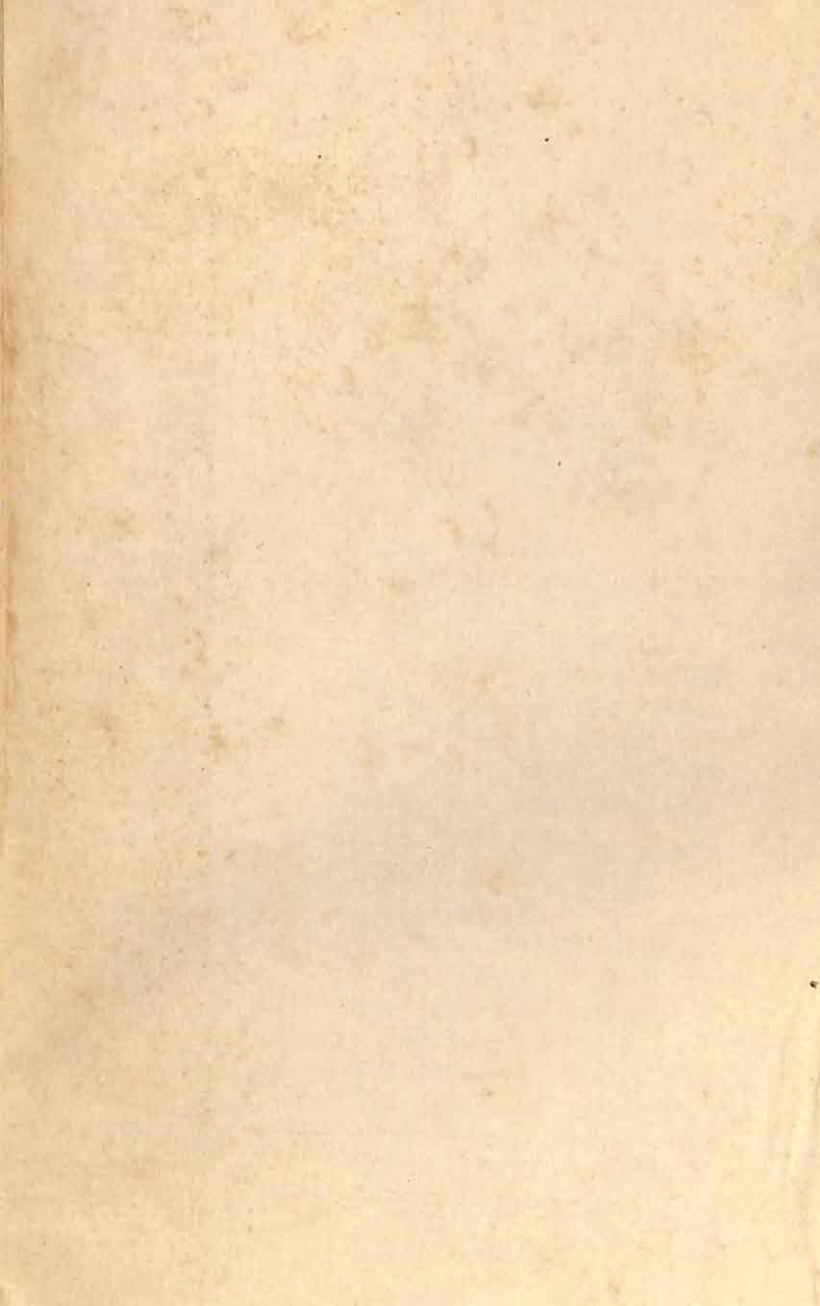
अहश्च रात्रिश्च अग्ने च सन्ध्ये ।

धर्मोऽपि जानाति नरस्य वृत्तम् ॥

The sun, the moon, the wind, the fire, the sky, the earth, water, the heart, death, day and night, both the twilights, and *dharma* itself — all these know of the conduct of every man.







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